BUILDING THE WHITE RIGHT OF TEXTILE WORK: DAN RIVER MILLS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOLFIELD VILLAGE, 1882-1931

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of American Studies.

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ABSTRACT

Elsabe Cornelia Dixon: Building the White Right of Textile Work: Dan River Mills and the Development of Schoolfield Village 1882-1931
(Under the direction of Seth Kotch)

"Building the White Right of Textile Work" explores how racial motivations propelled the capitalist venture of textiles to the American south beginning in the 1880s. The dissertation offers a case study of the textile company Dan River Mills and its mill village of Schoolfield near Danville, Virginia from 1882 until 1931. Since Dan River's founding in 1882, executives explicitly committed to hiring and uplifting an exclusively white workforce. By first recruiting white workers into a Black majority town and later housing over 5,000 workers in an exclusively white, planned community of Schoolfield, the company served a dual purpose as an economic, capitalist venture in cotton manufacturing as well as a social project for segregation and white supremacy. To showcase the dual purpose of capitalistic enterprises like Dan River Mills, I place the built environment of Schoolfield at the center of my analysis. Wielding urban planning theory and historical methods, my dissertation analyzes these everyday landmarks of work, recreation, and community. In my analysis, I incorporate archival materials, such as Dan River presidents' correspondence, original blueprints, and period newspapers, as well as present day architectural surveys and oral histories. Through interdisciplinary sources and methods of analysis, the case study of Dan River and Schoolfield opens new avenues for discussions of race, place, and the legacy of planned communities that contributed to the normalization of white supremacy in twentieth century America.

To Ed Walker, whose joyous enthusiasm for Schoolfield (and for getting the dissertation done) made this work and so much else possible.

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Other professors at UNC helped in the design and thinking of this dissertation. The soulful folklorist and great humanist Bill Ferris first encouraged me to bring my work to Chapel Hill and was a great friend and mentor to me throughout my program. In the Planning Department at UNC, Emil Malizia and Andrew Whittemore crystalized my obsession with urban planning, rehabilitation, and design, allowing a novice to try on their discipline without any qualms. Glenn Hinson was a helpful gadfly in my attempt at ethnography, and Rachel Seidman, Sara Wood and Joey Fink helped me see the power of oral history as a resource for this narrative.

Nothing would have been written, however, were it not for the generous funding I received in support of my research and writing. With Seth Kotch and Michelle Robinson's help, I was able to craft a good enough 'pitch' to gain wonderful opportunities. I entered UNC on several graduate school scholarships, and, thanks to Bobby Allen, a fellowship with the Community Histories Workshop, where I got to see how rehabilitation of old buildings and historical narratives can go hand in hand. Over the summers, I received research grants from the Center for the Study of American South and a Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Wilson Library, which allowed me to dig into the archives of Dan River and the wealth of other materials in the Southern Historical Collection at UNC. Matt Turi, John Blythe, Jackie Wells, Dawne Lucas, and Biff Hollingsworth were among many of the helpful librarians who supported and guided me through their extensive collections during that research fellowship and beyond. Other fellowships I received placed me at a new level of interdisciplinary comfort. The Weiss Urban Livability Fellowship and Maynard Adams Fellowship for the Public Humanities both brought me together with graduate students across disciplines beyond American Studies.

Similarly accreditive to my dissertation was one of the odd jobs I took on as a graduate student that turned out not to be so odd, but rather fruitful to my understanding of the south. Working summers and semesters as a research assistant for Seth Kotch's digital mapping project "A Red Record," I came to understand the broader context of whiteness, violence, and place. Researching instances of lynching in Virginia and elsewhere in the American south from the 1880s through the 1930s, though tough at times, helped me recognize the intricacy of race in a broader story of post-emancipation America.

Funding for the dissertation really started, however, with the Danville Regional Foundation (DRF). Through their paid summer internship in 2010 and a two-year fellowship running a community History project called History United in 2014-2016, my obsession with Danville began. I

owe so much to the people who made that possible. To Katie Whitehead, who nudged me into the internship in the first place, and all the DRF board staff at the time: Karl Stauber, Wendi Everson, Clark Casteel, Starling McKenzie, Stephanie Blevins, Shirley Jo Hite, Lori Merricks, Annie Martinie, Gary Waldman, Charley Majors, Alex Kaspar, Samanthe Belanger, Reggie Singletary, Evelyn Riley, Justin Ferrell, and Elyse Jardine all supported History United in some way or another and for their encouragement I will always be thankful. I'm also grateful for being included in a DRF-led tour of Danville that was coordinated for the film director Steven Spielberg, who quietly visited the city in the spring of 2019. When Spielberg made me promise that I would send him a copy of this dissertation when it was finished, that was a pretty good motivator for getting this done, too.

I am also grateful to those who helped keep History United alive in Danville when it became a program under the auspices of Virginia Humanities in Charlottesville. The late Rob Vaughan was integral piece to the transfer from DRF to Virginia Humanities. Additionally, David Bearinger, Matt Gibson, Carolyn Cades, Justin Reid, Jon Lohman, Trey Mitchell, Maggie Guggenheimer and Gail Shirley-Warren helped wrangle a community project into a program operated by one of the greatest state humanities organizations in the nation. Because of Virginia Humanities, I was able to enliven local public history programs with renown scholars, like historians Henry Wiencek and Ed Ayers, who spoke in Danville. I benefited greatly by gleaning their wisdom about the American south as I paved my own path of study in that field.

Long-time Schoolfielders and Danvillians, of course, were the source of inspiration for this dissertation. My discussions with those who lived in the former mill village and had local knowledge of Dan River Mills gave me the framework to begin research. Carol Handy, Elaine Handy Parker, Judy Edmonds, Dana and Barry Reagan, Reverend David Turbyfill, Al Crouch, Gary Knick, Randy Hedrick, Gary Grant, Clara Fountain not only stewarded Schoolfield history, but made it come alive. Local historians Dave Corp, Ressie Luck, and Ruby Douglas of the Danville Historical Society and

Dean Hairston helped complete the picture of Danville, offering archives and stories of Danville's history and the Black and white families who contributed to that narrative.

Not knowing anything, initially, about how to leverage my training as a historian for actual wages, I also am indebted to developers Ed Walker, Brent Cochran and Ken Larking and Corrie Bobe with the City of Danville for showing me the way through historic rehabilitation projects that benefited from my academic research. Along with Renee Burton, Hill Studio's historical consultants Alison Blanton, Katie Gutshall, and Kate Kronau, Department of Historical Resources staff Mike Pulice, their support ensured Schoolfield's story is not just here in a dissertation, but in a public narrative that could help revitalize Schoolfield along more inclusive lines. While the narrative for the Schoolfield Historic District was my own research, the architectural survey I oversaw to successfully create the historic district would not have been possible without the swift and enthusiastic work of my field scholars: Val-Rae Christensen, Colin Glenney, Morgan Duhan, and Mariah Wozniak. They helped survey the village's architecture in record time ensuring that, even amidst a global pandemic, Schoolfield's listing as a historic district was finished within a year. Thanks to all these good people, Schoolfield's history can be known through both an academic and public narrative.

Finally, I must give thanks to my parents, Rick and Elsabe Dixon. They ensured that southside Virginia remained a place of fascination for me always, setting the foundation for my future work of studying the people and place of my childhood.

PREFACE

Ten years ago, I was lucky enough to land a paid summer internship after graduating from college. It was my first professional role and it happened to be in Danville, Virginia, a former tobacco and textile town that, bereft of these once-bedrock industries, had fallen on hard economic times. Looking back now in 2021 on that internship, it's clear that my work in Danville that short summer inspired the questions of race, place, community, and profit that I have grappled with in this dissertation and my professional life as a historical consultant for over ten years.

I was interning then with the Danville Regional Foundation (DRF), a hospital-conversion foundation that had started in 2005. Seeing few alternatives for revitalization and economic uplift with the demise of Danville's leading industries, the local Danville Memorial Hospital was sold and privatized, with $200 million from the sale going into an endowment for DRF. This endowment helped establish DRF's mission: to serve as a philanthropic, grant-making entity in Danville and the surrounding area, including Caswell County in North Carolina. DRF was one of many attempts by city leaders to reenergize Danville, wielding a rich endowment to make small and large grants for area non-profits, schools, and local government. Along with their grant program, beginning in 2009 DRF sponsored a paid summer internship for college students and recent college graduates to work on community projects and bring new ideas, energy, and diverse perspective to the area. When I was hired in their second summer internship, I came to know Danville, its history, and the social ramifications of the loss of tobacco and textiles.

Though I had spent my childhood summers in Chatham, Virginia—a small town about twenty miles north of Danville—the internship brought me a renewed understanding of the city. In

my work as an intern that summer with DRF, I learned about the city's economic hardship, evidenced before only by what I did not see: empty streets, vacant storefronts, and abandoned tobacco warehouses. With DRF, I came to see this history and its people more deeply through a community project focused on local history called History United. History United was a DRF-assigned project that tasked us interns with finding a racially inclusive narrative of the region, one that brought together experiences of both Black and white residents, a narrative that largely did not yet exist. Local, public historical narratives at the time traced Danville's historical significance to the white tobacco tycoons, elite industrialists, and Danville's brief role as a capital of the Confederacy in 1865. Yet other narratives remained hidden. From the ousting of the city's biracial political coalition in the 1880s to the brutal attack on civil rights protesters in the summer of 1963 known as Bloody Monday, Danville had yet to reckon with its long history of racial animosity. There was more to Danville's story, one that encompassed both Black and white, both industrialist and worker, both leading men and significant women.

Figure 1. A blighted landscape near Danville's downtown. Author photo, 2015.

To find this story, a team of DRF interns including Reggie Singletary, Samanthe Tiver-Belanger, and I interviewed the people who knew local history best. Sonya Wolen, Sonja Ingram, Fred Motley, Emma Edmunds, Joyce Wilburn, Jay Hayes, and Gary Grant in Danville; Larry Aaron and Diane Adkins in Pittsylvania County; "Twinkle" Richmond-Graves, Rhonda Griffin, Joe Graves, Karen Oestreicher and Sallie Smith in Caswell County were all incredible resources as community historians. They helped me understand a local story of a people whose pride rested in their community, their labor, and the industries that gave them work.

After this summer internship, I returned to Danville in 2014 for a two-year fellowship to work full-time with DRF enhancing the programmatic aspects of History United. As the project lead for History United in this fellowship, I encouraged local history organizations to work together to create a more inclusive historical narrative of the region. We did this through capacity-building activities among local historical organizations and libraries, and through cooperative public programs that encouraged everyday people to see the power of their narrative in the life and history of the Danville area. In collaboration with local historical organizations, non-profits, and city staff, History United hosted speaker events with renowned scholars such as Ed Ayers and Henry Wiencek to explore Danville's place in national history and the story of the American south. To center everyday history, History United worked with StoryCorps on two separate projects to collect Danville stories, which are now archived with the Library of Congress. We also sponsored local oral history projects, created local civil rights history lesson plans for Danville area teachers, and produced reports on local archives and access in regional history organizations and libraries. During this time, I broadened my network of local historians and resources to gain a better understanding of how an inclusive public narrative could be woven. Community historians, librarians, and professors including Diane Adkins, Lisa Tuite, Karice Luck-Brimmer, Katie Whitehead, Paula Seamster, Dean Hairston, Bishop Lawrence Campbell, and Andrew Canady all helped me to understand the ways

Black and white communities and institutions had been separated through custom, culture, and law. The active work of History United in these years unearthed, for me, the once-silent narratives of Danville's history.

While I was living in Danville during this fellowship, I witnessed how these silent narratives of segregation and racial animosity directly affected the city in 2015. That summer, a white supremacist and Confederate fetishist murdered nine Black people at a Bible study at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. This massacre helped clarify for politicians what activists had been telling them for generations: it was past time that southern cities reckoned with their own Confederate pasts and reassessed their continued municipal stewardship of symbols of hatred, division, and racial oppression such as the Confederate flag. In the city of Danville, the municipality owned the Sutherlin mansion, now the Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History. A Confederate memorial with a prominent Confederate battle flag stood on the grounds in commemoration of the Sutherlin mansion's week as one of the last capitals of the Confederacy. Local outcry against the flag had persisted ever since its 1994 erection but it was only after the Charleston shooting that there was enough political will to consider removing the flag from city-owned grounds.

In August that summer, the Danville City Council announced they would put the removal of the flag to a vote at their council meeting agenda that month at the Danville Municipal Building. In anticipation of this decision, so-called "Flaggers"—pro-Confederate protestors—from North Carolina and Virginia rallied in protest against taking down the Sutherlin mansion flag. As one founding member of the Virginia Flaggers declared, the Confederate flag wasn't a symbol of hate but an honorary symbol of veterans who "fought to preserve the country" and "Southern heritage." Taking it down, as another Flagger declared, would just show that Danville City Council was jumping on the "politically correct bandwagon." Before the August council meeting, the Virginia

Flaggers vowed to "pepper this city" with Confederate Battle flags if the Sutherlin mansion flag was removed from the grounds.[1]

On the evening of the council meeting, white crowds gathered at the Municipal Building, filling the room and holding up Confederate battle flags. After a lengthy public comment period, it finally came time for the City Council to make its decision. In a 7-2 vote, the council voted to remove the Confederate battle flag from the grounds of the Sutherlin mansion. The city manager arranged for the flag to be removed that night. Amidst the onset of rain that evening, a Black deputy chief of police swiftly took down the flag, while a few of the scattered white protestors looked on, drenched and angry.[2]

Figure 2. Pro-Confederate flag attendees at the August Danville City Council meeting. Courtesy of the Danville Register and Bee, August 6, 2015.

Though the pouring rain that night dampened the pushback of flag proponents, a retaliation by the Flaggers quickly followed. In the weeks following the removal of the Sutherlin mansion flag,

[1] Michael Livingston, "Group Raises Flag Ahead of Vote; Vows to 'Pepper This City' with More," *Danville Register & Bee*, August 6, 2015, https://godanriver.com/news/local/group-raises-flag-ahead-of-vote-vows-to-pepper-this-city-with-more/article_285eb456-3caa-11e5-9b96-530b5b132024.html.

[2] Denice Thibodeau, "Confederate Flag Comes Down," *Danville Register & Bee*, August 6, 2015, https://godanriver.com/news/local/confederate-flag-comes-down/article_95208f3a-3c8f-11e5-8aae-ffa6396da80d.html.

massive Confederate flags began to crop up in the region with private white property owners erecting these large flags at almost every entrance of the City of Danville.[3] The odd thing about this white protest over preserving white history and heritage was that the flag taken down on the Sutherlin grounds was not historic at all. The flag and monument had been flying on the Sutherlin grounds just since 1994. After a rectangular Confederate Flag had been taken down in the 1990s, a local Confederate group raised funds to erect a small stone obelisk with a flagpole of the Confederate battle flag, allegedly to place the flag "in its historic context."[4] These flag supporters professed that this monument had no other social or political agenda despite being erected almost 130 years after the Civil War.

Baffled by this proliferation of Confederate symbols that clearly had a meaning beyond their "historic context," I rededicated myself to the work of History United in Danville. I wanted to investigate the root causes of this renewed Confederate sympathy, not just instances of their occurrence in the racist events of the past like Bloody Monday. I came to find these causes in the story of Schoolfield, and the economic powerhouse that was Dan River Mills.

[3] Danielle Staub, "World's Largest Confederate Battle Flag Is Coming to Danville" (WDBJ, July 21, 2016), http://www.wdbj7.com/content/news/Worlds-largest-Confederate-Flag-is-coming-to-Danville-387878102.html.

[4] Staub, "World's Largest Confederate Battle Flag Is Coming to Danville."

Figure 3. The former Schoolfield mill site in 2019. Photo by Katie Gutshall, Hill Studio, 2019.

By the time I got to know Schoolfield and Dan River's legacy, it hardly seemed possible that this place and company had been economically powerful at all. The 82-acre mill site that had once been crowded with brick mills, dye houses, weave sheds, and warehouses had been destroyed—left as a pile of "dead bricks," in the words of one Schoolfielder.[5] The built environment of the village had a gapped-tooth quality with sprawling vacant lots, grass-gripped broken asphalt and empty storefronts with shattered front windows.

Keenly aware of the once-bustling community of Schoolfield and distressed by the destruction of some of the mill village's central landmarks, a group of alumni from Schoolfield High School, which had closed in 1954, rallied in attempt to preserve the remaining landmarks. After failing to save the 1916 former YMCA and Recreation Center, the group met preservation success

[5] Carol Handy and Elaine H. Parker Interview, interview by Ina Dixon, February 25, 2018.

when they purchased the former Dan River Welfare Building, dedicating it as a museum to the community's history.

The Schoolfield Museum and Cultural Center opened in 2011 in the renovated first floor of Dan River's former Welfare Building and opened up a new narrative of Danville to me when I visited it. When I met and spoke with Carol Handy, one of the museum's board members, she told me how dedicated alumni gave money, time, energy, and valuable Schoolfield heirlooms to create the museum. A local Danville historian, Gary Grant, had written an exhibit narrative that offered a venerating story of Schoolfield and Dan River. Throughout the exhibit were Dan River rings, given to those who had served ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty-years of their life at the company. There was a Schoolfield band uniform from the 1920s complete with the player's old trombone, a china set from the former Dan River women's dormitory Hylton Hall, a girl scout uniform, quilts, and curtains all made up of Dan River fabric. This museum had been a labor of love and an attempt to save the memory of the Schoolfield community before it had changed so drastically from the 5,000-person, tight-knit community these board members had known. Carol Handy, like many others on the Schoolfield Museum's board, had never worked at the mill, but worked to preserve the world she knew as a child growing up in Schoolfield, and the world her parents knew as career millhands at Dan River. In the absence of the people, buildings, work, and life of the village, the museum could preserve the past as a safeguard against an indifferent future and a changing Danville.

Figure 4. The Museum sign just outside the front entrance. Author photo, 2018.

Figure 5. One of the displays at the museum complete with a band uniform, spools, script and other Dan River-related paraphernalia. Author photo, 2019.

The biggest change in Danville was its return to a Black majority city, and a new Black majority in Schoolfield. After Danville's annexation of Schoolfield in 1951, the 840 mill houses were sold in the 1950s to white mill workers, who usually stayed for another ten or twenty years, but then

moved from their small wood-frame homes into other more modern Danville suburbs with brick ranch-style houses. By the 1980s, the historic Schoolfield homes fell into the hands of local and distant landlords. Schoolfield reverted back to a rental community as it had been as a company town under the thumb of Dan River. Now, residents are mostly Black or Latino, changing the once entirely white makeup of the community.

When Schoolfielders Carol and Elaine were growing up, Black people didn't live in these Schoolfield houses; they worked in them as maids, cooks, and nannies, or walked by them on their way to janitorial jobs at the mill—the only positions Black workers were allowed to take before 1969.[6] Black people, who mostly lived in the nearby village of Almagro, or in Mechanicsville in downtown Danville, brought residents their rolls of toilet paper, cleaned out privies, swept the floors of the mills, and tore open bags of raw cotton to be spun, woven, and dyed for Dan River fabric.[7] Schoolfield was a community of and for white people and their place atop the social and economic order was made clear to them every day.

Seeing firsthand the effects of a local economy's collapse merging with a resurging Confederate sympathy, destruction of the industrial built environment, and a changing racial majority in Danville drove me back to graduate school to make sense of it all. In 2017, I enrolled in a doctoral program in American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. With the goal of writing my dissertation on the built history of Dan River mill's village of Schoolfield, I centered every bit of my coursework on the topic. The classes I took in urban planning, oral history, ethnography, and literature brought more depth to the nagging feeling that a white supremacist

[6] Carol and Elaine had a nanny name Fanny Luck whom they called their "Black mama." Carol Handy and Elaine H. Parker Interview.

[7] In a 1984 interview, a white mill worker recalled that "there was colored men that brought the toilet paper around and colored men that helped the toilets, clean the house. And that's about all the colored people we seen." Ella Paxton, interview by Jack Irby Hayes, August 7, 1984, Averett University Collections; Judy Edmonds shared with me the story of the "honey wagon," a cart driven by a Black man who would wind his way through Schoolfield cleaning the tanks of the outhouses. Judy Edmonds, interview by Ina Dixon, March 15, 2019.

culture was intimately connected with the southern textile industry that had built modern Danville and the neighborhood of Schoolfield.

In my research of Dan River Mills, many of the oral and written histories I came across took the white racial makeup of millhands as incidental, and not essential to development of textiles in the south. Yet, the more I read of the Dan River Mills founders' diaries and letters, white supremacy seemed to play a starring role. From mill founder Robert Addison Schoolfield's own admission that he participated in Black voter intimidation and suppression at the same time Dan River was founded, to later mill president Harry Fitzgerald's documented dedication to white uplift through extensive welfare programs in the 1900s, both mill men saw Black economic power as a threat to white social dominance. I came to understand these men's dual investment in textiles and whiteness, which helped establish the privileges of whiteness to those who had not especially known them before, namely, the poor Appalachian and rural farmhands recruited for this industrial work. This work came with a house, childcare, healthcare, education, and industrial training, opportunities that allowed the economic stability and upward mobility that may never have happened for these poor white workers without Dan River Mills.

Dan River Mills had developed the village of Schoolfield just as many developers create suburbs today—with the intent of creating an ideal community within a controlled, ordered environment. With industrialization, modernization, and economic uplift as its explicit objectives, the company implicitly carried the tenets of white supremacy into the life of Schoolfield, naturalizing an antebellum racial hierarchy for generations. This hierarchy and the privileges of whiteness were important psychologically to Schoolfielders, who had been degraded as lintheads or "second-class citizens" by their middle and upper-class white peers in Danville.[8] In Schoolfield, it was easy to forget that one's parents were working-class, but when the village was annexed by the city in 1951,

[8] Carol Handy and Elaine H. Parker Interview.

the class difference wounded a generation of young Schoolfielders, who, maybe for the first time, were left to feel as though they were not in that privileged class of whiteness. The wound was deepened after Dan River shuttered is mills in Danville and Schoolfield in 2006. The city's subsequent neglect of the built environment of Schoolfield reawakened a desperate effort for some Danvillians to preserve what they remembered of life in a textile town—racial hierarchy and all.

Influenced by my community history work in Danville and my work at UNC, I started to think the real historic context of the flag protests in the city were related not to the loss in 1865, but the loss in 2006. The real historic context of this Confederate proliferation was the slow erosion of the American textile industry being felt in real time by workers in Danville as early as the 1990s. This anxiety over job loss and future economic opportunities across the working class, both white and Black, fueled among some white people a reprised fetishism for the Confederate flag and the antebellum racial hierarchy for which it stands. It should have been no surprise that this outpouring for Confederate memorials happened in a textile town. Because of companies like Dan River, white supremacy had been embedded in work and community, keeping the tenets of the Confederacy alive. With Dan River gone, the privileges of whiteness—of steady work, education, and healthcare—had gone with it. With the industrial markers of white supremacy erased from the built environment, the old symbols were all many white people had left.

That is not to say that all white Dan River workers, Schoolfielders, or Danvillians were virulent racists and white supremacists, or that they hadn't free will enough to depart from a working culture of white supremacy. They did and they do. Yet the persistent lingering of racial animosity in the city must be understood by tracing those deep roots of work and life that set expectations for prosperity, citizenship and privilege.

A Chance to Repurpose the Past

While I was studying these histories at UNC, the Schoolfield museum fell into dire financial straits. The support it had seen when it first opened had all but dried up. The board was older, they were tired, and there were little to no funds left to continue paying the mortgage or the utility bills for the 8,400 square-foot, 1917 building. When I heard of the museum's economic woes, I called the head of the Schoolfield museum board, Dana Reagan, in the summer of 2018. Dana was a younger generation Schoolfielder who had grown up in Schoolfield well after annexation and had pursued opportunities beyond Danville. She had joined the board after the museum's founding, and, as one of its younger members, was struggling to keep up with the duties that she juggled along with a full-time job. Exhausted along with the rest of the board, Dana talked with me that summer about options for the museum's future. We discussed how the board could sell the building and what they could do with the exhibit material, artifacts, and company archives held in the museum. Dana was open to the sale if the right developer came along who could cover the rest of the mortgage payments for the building as well as the expenses that the board had put into the redevelopment of the building's first floor. The next owner, Dana and I agreed, would ideally be a steward to Schoolfield's legacy through the Welfare Building's thoughtful redevelopment. By the winter of 2019, we found such a steward in the Virginia developer Ed Walker. Ed was most known for his historic redevelopment work in the revitalization of the southwest Virginia city of Roanoke about an hour and forty minutes' drive from Danville. In January he and I were sitting with the museum board, discussing terms of a six-month due diligence process to prepare for the sale of the building.

Over the next six months, Ed and I worked with Dana, her husband Barry, and other board members and Schoolfielders, Gary Knick, Randy Hedrick, Gary Grant, and Judy Edmonds to inventory, transfer, and accessibly and safely store the Schoolfield collection and exhibits. We transferred the museum's extensive Dan River archive, originally organized in 1982 by a local

historian Clara Fountain, to the Southern Historical Collection at the Wilson Library at UNC. Other local documents we gave to the Danville Historical Society, and the complete Schoolfield exhibit was packed and stored at the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History with an understanding that certain pieces from the exhibit could be used in the redevelopment of the Welfare Building. These transfers, we hoped, would help integrate the Schoolfield story into the broader narrative of Danville and southern textiles.

Figure 6. All hands were on deck to organize the Dan River archives before they were transferred to the Wilson Library. Author photo, 2019.

With exhibits and archives safely transferred, Ed purchased the building at the end of the six-month due diligence period. However, in gaining the Welfare Building, we lost some things, too. Carol Handy, who originally opened my eyes to Schoolfield through the museum in 2014,

vehemently disagreed with our choice of transferring the exhibit and archives to other community and institutional stewards. She has not spoken to me since we sat at that January 2019 board meeting, although I attempted to reach out and include her in the organization and transfer of the archives and exhibit. Others on the museum board were also opposed to Ed's purchase of the building and our plans for redeveloping it into a more peopled use beyond just a museum. Schoolfield history was in essence family history, and some members of the board thought they should be the sole stewards of what they saw as an intimate history of their heritage and community. Ed and I saw the transfer of Dan River archives and buildings as more of a relay, with a new generation of stewards taking on the legacy and ensuring its safekeeping for the next generation. I was sorry to have lost my relationship with Carol and others with the momentum of redevelopment. In this process, however, Ed and I became closer to other Schoolfielders. With their help, trust, and encouragement through the sale of the museum and the transfer of its important exhibits and archives, the legacy of Schoolfield can be more deeply remembered, studied, and understood in a broader context of industrialization, urbanization, and segregation in the south.

Once this transfer was complete, Ed and I set up a small apartment in a corner of the Welfare Building to get to know the community better. Living in the building was one of the best ways to get to know the neighborhood and understand the pathways for Schoolfield's future growth and development beyond its historic purpose as an all-white company town. The longer we stayed at the Welfare building, the more Ed became convinced of the Schoolfield village's importance and its potential for future development. We soon created a plan to purchase remaining Dan River property in an effort to spearhead redevelopment in the area. Ed purchased the commercial row of buildings down the street from the Welfare Building and the former 1903 executive office building on West Main Street. By the end of 2019, we had acquired most of the remaining Dan River commercial and social buildings in Schoolfield.

The more Ed and I got to know Schoolfield and as Ed worked on other projects in Danville with the City's Economic Development office, his work in Schoolfield got their notice, too. By the end of 2019, the City hired a team of expert community planners and designers at the consulting firm WRT to develop a vibrant masterplan for Schoolfield by engaging the surrounding residents in the process. There was one big hurdle in the way of redevelopment, however, one that would need to be overcome before redevelopment efforts could practically move ahead.

Figure 7. The Commercial row known as "the Front," which Ed Walker acquired soon after the Welfare Building further east on West Main Street. Author photo, 2018

Despite its historicity, Schoolfield had yet to be designated as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places or the Virginia Landmarks Register. As a district listed on the National Register, Schoolfield's houses, stores, and offices could all have the added benefit of historic tax credits, should owners desire to rehabilitate their properties within the district. Register listing is purely honorary, but it comes with economic benefits that help save and revitalize bereft historic buildings. As a vital component of any redevelopment campaign, historic tax credits for listed properties at the state and federal level refund about twenty to forty percent of redevelopment costs for qualifying buildings, incentivizing their rehabilitation. Schoolfield needed this benefit to attract community-minded developers to the area and encourage new investment.

Historic tax credits stand at the crossroads of history and real estate development, establishing economic value in line with historical significance. I invested in this dual value in 2019, when I began my own historical consulting firm to help nominate Schoolfield as a historic district. In 2020, the City hired my newly founded historical consulting company, Storied Capital, as part of a team to conduct a survey of the village towards its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. From January through May, a team of historic consultants and I conducted an architectural survey of over 762 properties that made up the 512-acre district. We worked tirelessly—almost derailed by the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020—to photograph, document, and inventory the architecture and significance of the homes, churches, schools, community, and industrial buildings within the district. We used my research of the Dan River archives deposited at Wilson Library, which I had reviewed in the summer and fall of 2019 through generous grants from UNC's Center for the Study of the American South and Wilson Library. This research helped to shape not only my dissertation, but also helped determine the Schoolfield district's boundaries, significant historical dates, and make the case for its overall historical significance in the narrative portion of the application for national listing.

Because this nomination narrative is publicly accessible during the nomination process and after listing, it needed to tell an inclusive history of textiles, centering a story of racial segregation in this industrial narrative. In the historical narrative portion of the application that I wrote for the Schoolfield's Historic District (one which was strengthened with editing from my colleagues Alison Blanton and Katie Gutshall at Hill Studio), I wielded as much archival evidence as I could to accomplish, in a small way, what History United had set out to do ten years prior. Working with the motivation of an inclusive narrative, I sought to name whiteness in the public history of textiles, highlighting that industry's role in forging, investing in, and reinvigorating a concept of race that denoted social privilege, economic success, and political entitlement. Schoolfield's public nomination

narrative was not meant to center the white experience, but to showcase how the development of a 'white experience' conceptually separate from a 'Black experience' in Danville could even be discussed in the first place.

In the fall of 2020, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the National Park Service reviewed the resultant lengthy nomination application for the Schoolfield Historic District. In December of 2020 these state and federal agencies both had approved the nomination application and Schoolfield was officially listed as a historic district. Hopefully, this listing may encourage redevelopment, rather than demolition of Schoolfield's remaining historic fabric. Listing Schoolfield may also help set a new public narrative of the southern textile industry that shows how whiteness was integral, not incidental, to the creation of this cotton mill world. The buildings in Schoolfield can be the landmarks of a founding culture that promoted racial segregation and white supremacy, but they can also be the change agents for unmaking whiteness through their redevelopment. In redeveloping the use of these historic buildings—and rethinking how they are used and by whom—can help remake and reimagine their meaning away from one of exclusivity and towards a more inclusive use.

The task of revitalization is already underway in Schoolfield and is being led by the City of Danville's economic development office, who in recent months secured an anchor tenant for the former Schoolfield mill site that has sat vacant for fifteen years. Caesars Entertainment—best known for their international casinos and resorts—purchased much of the Schoolfield site from the City in early 2021. Recognizing that a casino cannot be the saving economic engine for the community, Danville's economic development office is also investing in a thoughtful community development plan led by a renowned consultant group, WRT. WRT, an interdisciplinary team of planners, urban designers, architects, and landscape architects, will work with community residents to support the revitalization of the neighborhood surrounding the future casino resort site.

Balancing economic opportunity with social responsibility, by selling the mill site to Caesars and hiring WRT to develop a community master plan, the City of Danville is at the beginning of a long process of economic renewal and community empowerment. This process will have to reckon with the past and future of Schoolfield.

With the Schoolfield community now undergoing a dynamic transition, this dissertation offers one way to reckon with the past as the community forges into the future. This dissertation is also one of many avenues I have pursued to find ways to understand and reimagine the past. Since my first foray into this past under History United, I've realized that Danville and Schoolfield are part of a much larger story that can be told through and with the built environment. Acknowledging whiteness as a historical presence, we can move beyond it. By rehabilitating the former landmarks of a racial hierarchy, we can remake them for our more inclusive use today. But first, we must understand what they stood for. We must understand this story about place, race, and privilege in the American south.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFL	American Federation of Labor
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
DRF	Danville Regional Foundation
DRM	Dan River Mills
LMA	Ladies Memorial Association
NTWU	National Textile Workers Union
SCV	Sons of Confederate Veterans
SHC	Southern Historical Collection
TWUA	Textile Workers Union of America
UDC	United Daughters of the Confederacy
UNC	University of North Carolina (at Chapel Hill)
UTWA	United Textile Workers of America
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

INTRODUCTION

In 1915, Hattie Hylton reflected on the legacy of Dan River Mills, the textile giant that had been churning a profit in Danville, Virginia since 1882. Hylton, an educated white southern woman, ran the welfare program at Dan River, and had learned the story of the company's beginnings from its founders. In a talk she gave in acclaim of her welfare program at the company, Hylton argued that welfare for white workers was merely an extension of Dan River's capitaled benevolence. Dan River had saved Danville from being a "a straggling town," as Hylton described it, with "as many [N]egroes as there were white people." This diverse postbellum racial make-up of Danville was, as Hylton opined, a "great menace to the well-being of the community." Hylton lamented that the "menace" of a majority Black community had economic consequences for poor white people in the area. While the tobacco business in Danville had offered black residents "ample opportunity to make a living" there had been nothing "to afford the least chance for the poor and illiterate white people." Hylton explained that textiles were founded in Danville by "the most thoughtful citizens," who relieved the "unequal and galling situation" of Black participation in the free labor market and southern citizenry.[1] Amidst the alleged perils of Reconstruction-era Danville, Hylton praised industrial work as having saved the south by saving white southerners from a desolate economic destiny and social oblivion.

[1] Hattie Hylton, "A Fifteen Minutes' Talk on The Schoolfield Welfare Work: Its Aims, Methods, and Results" (Welfare Conference of Southern Employers, Black Mountain, N.C., 1915). Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. NB: Citations of archives from the Southern Historical Collection will be abbreviated to "SHC" hereafter.

As Hattie Hylton boasted in 1915, textiles had built white supremacy in the New South. In the collapse of the Confederacy, capitaled men across the southern states of America invested in textiles to sustain a white economic, social and political advantage through the "white right" of textile work.[2] This white right was established chiefly through the built environment of textile mill villages, which peppered the landscape of the southern textile crescent from Birmingham, Alabama up to Danville, Virginia.[3] Industrialists filled their villages in the textile crescent with white men, women, and children from the hills of Appalachia and surrounding rural areas, where the desired pure "native Anglo-Saxon" worker could be found.[4] These white "primitive folk," received the necessary education, spiritual uplift, healthcare, and urban socialization that could transform them into better examples of an Anglo-Saxon ideal.[5] To inculcate social norms of whiteness, textile companies designed and operated the schools, churches, community and medical buildings, and homes that became an "all-encompassing social system" that would ultimately, as many industrialists

[2] This term is gathered from Melton McLaurin and his discussion of white supremacy in the southern textile industry. Melton Alonza McLaurin, *Paternalism and Protest: Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Organized Labor, 1875-1905*, Contributions in Economics and Economic History, no. 3 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Pub. Corp, 1971), 60–67.

[3] There is no one definitive "Piedmont Crescent" of the New South; industrialization in the former Confederate states stretched up to northerly cities like Lynchburg and Roanoke, Virginia. However, most historians agree that textiles dominated the landscape from Virginia to Alabama and were most concentrated in the Carolinas. I adhere to Vance's geography of the Piedmont Crescent in this dissertation, which positions Danville at the gateway. Rupert B. Vance, *Human Geography of the South: A Study in Regional Resources and Human Adequacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932).

[4] American Cotton Manufacturers Association, "Resolution of the American Cotton Manufacturers Association," May 14, 1927, Box 15, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[5] Ashmun Brown, "Industry Is Giving Us a New South: A Story of Great Changes," *The Providence Journal*, February 1924, 36, Box 9, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; For more on the white anxiety over the southern textile industry's recruitment of "primordial folk," see Robert H. Zieger, "From Primordial Folk to Redundant Workers: Southern Textiles Workers and Social Observers, 1920-1990," in *Southern Labor in Transition, 1940-1995* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 273–95; Workers themselves wielded these derogatory terms for their own creative benefit, as historian Patrick Huber describes in Patrick Huber, *Linthead Stomp: The Creation of Country Music in the Piedmont South* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008; ProQuest Ebook Central), https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=454816#.

and boosters hoped, change the south into a land of "industry, of modern mills," with white labor.[6] In the ordered design and use of the mill village's built environment, management attempted to shape the cultural beliefs and attitudes of industrial communities by naturalizing and reifying white supremacy.

This dissertation tells the story of how the founders and managers of one textile company in Danville, Virginia balanced the company's economic success with the social project of white supremacy. From its founding in 1882 to the moment to a labor strike the winter of 1930-1931 that unraveled its paternalistic scheme of white uplift, the textile company of Dan River Mills established itself on a bedrock of race. In these years, company management created white work, built a village dedicated to the social and economic advancement of white people, and attempted to train the village's white inhabitants in the privileges of whiteness.

Dan River's story shares in the broader narrative of southern industrialization. Southern industrialization was not just about building a postwar economy. It promised the economic redemption of a squandered antebellum southern economic system that had rested much of its faith on agriculture and slavery. With slavery gone after the Civil War, white elites—sometimes former planters, but most often merchant-class men—sought fortunes in manufacturing rather than agriculture. By attracting northern investments or securing capital locally, southern corporations cropped up across the region in the 1870s and 1880s with towns and cities dedicated to modern industries: coal, the railroad, and textiles.

[6] Brown, "Industry Is Giving Us a New South: A Story of Great Changes," 36; Margaret Crawford, "Earle S. Draper and the Company Town in the American South," in *The Company Town: Architecture and Society in the Early Industrial Age*, ed. John S. Garner (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 144.

These New South cities grew fast.[7] The railroad town of Roanoke, Virginia, for example, attained the nickname of "the Magic City" as one of the fastest growing cities in the state by the early twentieth century, growing from a mere 21,000 residents in 1900 to booming with nearly 70,000 residents by 1930.[8] The faster the growth in many of these New South cities, the greater the racial segregation.[9] Cities like Roanoke, Charlotte, Nashville, and Atlanta, for instance, were deeply segregated by class, race, and work as they welcomed new industries and urban growth.[10]

Danville, Virginia was a smaller town but an equally robust example of New South growth. A quiet tobacco market town in the antebellum years, the city expanded in the 1880s and 1890s with new investments in tobacco manufacturing and textile manufacturing.[11] Both of these industries

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[7] My use of the term "New South" refers to the post-bellum ideology cultivated roughly between the Reconstruction Era and World War I that promoted a revolutionized south through commerce, industry, and social relations. C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, A History of the South, v. 9 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971).; Gaston, *The New South Creed A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Vintage, 1970; ProQuest Ebook Central, 2011). https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=3017582. Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction*, 15. anniversary ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[8] Kevan Delany Frazier, "Big Dreams, Small Cities: John Nolen, the New South, and the City Planning Movement in Asheville, Roanoke, and Johnson City, 1907–1937" (PhD diss., West Virginia, West Virginia University, 2000), 122, 196, ProQuest (AAT 304633740).; U.S. Census Bureau. Total Population, Roanoke, Virginia, 1900. Prepared by Social Explorer, https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1900/R12742483. U.S. Census Bureau. Total Population, Roanoke, Virginia, 1930. Prepared by Social Explorer, https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1930/R12742488.

[9] Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 67–69.

[10] Planning scholar Kevan Frazier discusses how the 1928 Roanoke plan by urban planner John Nolen simply relaid the strict racial segregation of that city's neighborhoods, which had developed at the turn of the century. Frazier, "Big Dreams, Small Cities," 148; For an entire case study of Charlotte's postbellum racial segregation evolution, see Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Nashville, like many other cities secluded Black people to "the least desirable sections of the city." Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 26, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b4362293; In Atlanta, Black workers in lumber, flour mills were separated from white cotton mill workers, who lived in segregated mill villages like Fulton Mills Village, better known as Cabbagetown. Don Harrison Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990; HathiTrust, 2020), 264, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015017006159.

[11] Gary Grant et al., "108-0058 Danville Tobacco Warehouse and Residential District" (Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 1978), 5, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond; Barbara Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright: Creating an American Commodity, 1617-1937*, Johns Hopkins Studies in the History of Technology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 49–51; See Enstad's discussion of the Bright Leaf network, in which Danville was a

reshaped the urban environment of Danville, but in critically different ways. Reliant on Black labor, the tobacco industry was mostly clustered downtown, where a group of companies in the Danville Tobacco Association built their sprawling brick tobacco factories, prizeries, auction houses, and warehouses to manufacture and sell tobacco to near and distant markets.[12] The tobacco industry encouraged the segregation of Black and white neighborhoods as work influenced where both races lived. Tobacco led to the development of Black neighborhoods in the Tobacco Warehouse District, the independent village of Almagro, and sections of the downtown neighborhood of Mechanicsville. In contrast, textiles had their mills sprawled along the Dan River and most of their workers were cloistered in North Danville.

Expanding from its early start in Danville's downtown area, in 1903 the textile giant Dan River Mills built its second division, the independent company town of Schoolfield, free from municipal constraints. Unfettered from taxes, democratic practices, and Danville's majority Black population, the leading white men who presided over Dan River Mills used urban planning and economic incentives to entrench white supremacy as an unchallenged norm. Through architecture, layout and the social schemes within the built environment, Dan River Mills' management taught white workers the privileges of whiteness through work, housing, education, welfare, and community.

Many cultural and labor studies of the southern textile industry's development from the 1880s through the early 1900s miss this story of Dan River Mills' racialized founding. The white right of textile work has been acknowledged since historian Melton McLaurin's classic text *Paternalism and Protest: Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Organized Labor, 1875-1905* (1971). Yet too few

central player Nan Enstad, *Cigarettes, Inc: An Intimate History of Corporate Imperialism* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 10–12.

[12] Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright*, 45.

historians since have deeply questioned how this white work was created through the process of southern industrialization and the conscious development of company towns. Indeed, cultural and labor studies of southern textile industry's development from the 1880s through the early 1900s have even obscured race as a primary motivation of the industry's postbellum growth and whiteness's influence on workers.[13] Daniel Clark's *Like Night & Day: Unionization in a Southern Mill Town* (1997), for instance, disregarded race as a "significant issue" in his study of organizing efforts in one textile mill village.[14] In Jacquelyn Dowd Hall and co-author's oral history-based narrative *Like a Family: the Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (1987), the authors initially overlooked a race in an attempt "to allow [white] people to narrate their own lives, emphasizing what seemed most meaningful and important to them."[15] Yet in interviewing only those who were allowed to work in the textile industry, the book reasserted the whiteness of the southern cotton mill world instead of questioning it. In an afterword for the second edition, written nearly fifteen years after original publication, *Like a Family* authors themselves regretted not writing "more extensively and pointedly about the 'whiteness' of the textile industry."[16]

A vision of textiles and mill village development as a by-product of racial segregation rather than a vehicle for its normalization, rests on the belief that textiles came to the south solely for economic and not social reasons. Hall and co-authors, for instance, pointed to the south's abundance of cheap labor as "the foundation of the southern textile industry."[17] However, as

[13] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, 2000 ed., The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 284; Daniel J. Clark, *Like Night & Day: Unionization in a Southern Mill Town* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

[14] Clark, *Like Night & Day*, 8.

[15] Hall et al., *Like a Family*, xix.

[16] Hall et al., 372–73.

[17] Hall et al., 80.

economic historian Gavin Wright remarked in his study of southern industrialization, the southern economy cannot be evaluated without a consideration of a southern culture that was "not democratic…[with] large portions of its population…denied access to the political process and other fundamental human rights."[18] As Wright describes, at the turn of the century and until the Civil Rights era, the south was not incidentally segregated or discriminatory. Textile companies and their mill villages were not incidentally so, either.[19]

By reframing the narrative of the southern textile industry with the architecture and urban form of mill villages, the mechanisms of white supremacy that created this white work become more visible. Mill villages or company towns, though not understudied urban forms, help to correct the assumption of whiteness being incidental and not essential to the southern textile industry.[20] In these

[18] Wright, 272.

[19] Similar to Wright, in her 2018 book on the tobacco industry, historian Nan Enstad argues that "[t]here was no 'economy' separate from 'culture'—they were intertwined at every level." Enstad helpfully grounds the cigarette industry's international rise in the South and in China in race, arguing that in both places "[t]here was nothing taken for granted or incidental about the whiteness of this [tobacco] industry." Nan Enstad, *Cigarettes, Inc: An Intimate History of Corporate Imperialism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), xi,12.

[20] On company towns in general, see Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns*, Haymarket Series (London ; New York: Verso, 1995); John S. Garner, ed., *The Company Town: Architecture and Society in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City*, 1st ed. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009); Hardy Green, *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills That Shaped the American Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); James Michael Buckley, "Company Towns in the Americas: Landscape, Power, and Working-Class Communities," *Labor* 9, no. 4 (December 1, 2012): 88–90, https://doi.org/10.1215/15476715-1726072; On textile mill villages more specifically, see Lois. MacDonald, *Southern Mill Hills: A Study of Social and Economic Forces in Certain Textile Mill Villages* (New York: A. L. Hillman, 1928; HathiTrust, 2019), https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015008895685; Harriet L Herring, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages: The Story of Extra-Mill Activities in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929); Harriet L Herring, *Passing of the Mill Village: Revolution in a Southern Institution.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1949); Jennings Ryhne, *Some Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Their Villages* (New York: Arno Press, 1977); Brent Glass, "Southern Mill Hills: Design in a 'Public' Place," in *Carolina Dwelling: Towards a Preservation of Place, In Celebration of the North Carolina Vernacular Landscape*, ed. Doug Swaim (Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina State University, 1978), 138–49; William Phillips, "Southern Textile Mill Villages on the Eve of World War II: The Courtenay Mill of South Carolina," *Journal of Economic History* 45, no. 2 (June 1985): 269–75; Susan J. Berry, "The Architecture of Power: Spatial and Social Order in Seven Rhode Island Mill Villages" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1992), ProQuest (AAT 9304858).; Mary Lether Wingerd, "Rethinking Paternalism: Power and Parochialism in a Southern Mill Village," *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (1996): 872–902, https://doi.org/10.2307/2945643; Toby Harper Moore, "The Unmaking of a Cotton Mill World: Place, Politics and the Dismantling of the South's Mill Village System" (PhD diss., The University of Iowa, 1999), ProQuest (AAT 9957300).; Toby Moore, "Discourses of Work and Consumption in the Demise of the Southern Cotton Mill Village System," *Business and Economic History* 28, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 163–72; Robert Blythe, "Unravelling the Threads of Community Life: Work, Play, and Place in the Alabama Villages of the West Point Manufacturing Company," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 9, Construction Image, Identity,

towns built at the turn of the century, southern industrialists carved the landscape to frame place and belonging for workers, taking on progressive visions for a working utopia through the conscious design and control of an urban environment where white millhands could work, play, and live under management's gaze.[21] The controlled environment of the mill village is a "distinctive urban form," as architectural historian Margaret Crawford has identified.[22] A study of this form and the peopled history of it opens new avenues of understanding how white elites' notions of whiteness were expressed through their paternalistic domination of planned communities for workers.

As a controlled company town, the southern textile mill village has fallen into easy but false comparison with the plantation system of the Old South.[23] This association of mill villages with plantations in a different era glosses over the modernity of these villages' conscious design, and the social uplift afforded to white workers who lived within its confines. Such conscious design and welfare were never offered to Black enslaved people under the social and economic system of American slavery.[24] The significance of southern textile mill villages is not in their coincidence with the antebellum plantation, but in the precedent these enclaves set for the all-white suburban

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and Place Issue (2003): 135–50; James J. Lorence, "The Workers of Chicopee: Progressive Paternalism and the Culture of Accommodation in a Modern Mill Village," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 91, no. 3 (2007): 292–323; Timothy W Vanderburg, *Cannon Mills and Kannapolis: Persistent Paternalism in a Textile Town*, 2013, http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1550484.

[21] Gene A. Ford, "Social Engineering through Spatial Engineering: Special Purpose Roads for the Safety, Health, and Well-Being of the Community in New Company Town Planning" (master's thesis, The University of Alabama, 2014), ProQuest (AAT 1561348); Berry, "The Architecture of Power."

[22] Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*, 1.

[23] As W.J. Cash famously described textile mill villages, "...that is exactly what the Southern factory almost invariable was: a plantation, essentially indistinguishable in organization from the familiar plantation of the cotton fields." W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*, Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 200.

[24] As Ayers argues, textile mill villages centered around work, kinship, and friendship among other workers in the community, not a "longing for a lost plantation ideal." Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 116.

landscape that matured in tandem at a later moment of white anxiety with the fall of *de jure* segregation in post-World War II America.[25]

Mill villages were not an extension of an antebellum practice, but a new ambitious effort to maintain a stable white workforce with the tools of the built environment. Just like the planned developments of post-World War II America, southern textile mill villages were similarly filled with detached single-family housing, churches, community centers, stores, and parks that served as "poignant ciphers for whiteness, affluence, belonging, and a sense of permanent stability."[26] Their inhabitants were recruited and vetted and the mill village itself curated in an effort to retain a desired type of white worker. Following best practices in design, management often hired nationally regarded architects and engineers to plan and construct their southern villages beyond the reach of municipal control.[27] Blending some aspects of rurality and urban life, management sought to entice workers away from the hills of Appalachia and the rural farms of the south with the promise of opportunity, stability, and privilege visible in villages' tidy homes, well-appointed businesses, and clean streets of the built environment.

The built environment, or the homes, stores, workplaces, streets that make up an urban space or neighborhood, has been a subject of fascination to urban historians. Since 1964 when urban scholar Ruth Glass coined the term gentrification, the process by which marginalized

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[25] While historians of the suburbs do not make the explicit link, mill village life-- all white communities living in detached houses beyond city limits-- share similar aspects of post-World War Two suburban America. Dianne Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013; Minnesota Scholarship Online, 2013), https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816653324.001.0001; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), 26; James Jacobs, *Detached America: Building Houses in Postwar Suburbia* (University of Virginia Press, 2015), https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt166gr82; Louise A. Mozingo, *Pastoral Capitalism: A History of Suburban Corporate Landscapes*, Urban and Industrial Environments (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011).

[26] Harris, *Little White Houses*, 1.

[27] Many early mill villages followed the guidance of Daniel Tompkins, who wrote the textbook for starting a mill in the south. D.A. Tompkins, *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features. A Text-Book for the Use of Textile Schools and Investors.* (Charlotte, NC: Published by the author, 1899), ps://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/tompkins/tompkins.html.

communities are displaced by influx of higher income people, historians have similarly have found that racism's expression can be read through the end uses of the built environment. Scholar Carl Nightingale, for instance, pinpoints segregation in the twentieth century as a global phenomenon, that can be traced back to professional urban planners, real estate agents, and banks. These professional networks safeguarded beliefs in white supremacy by controlling the real estate market and creating new planned communities that were segregated by design.[28] In *A World More Concrete,* N.D.B. Connolly similarly argues that private real estate and redevelopment actors made segregation profitable and amenable to urban growth in his study of post-World War II Florida. Other historians have focused the blame for segregation squarely on government policies in the creation of zoning in the 1910s, redlining during the New Deal, and the bulldozer revolution of Urban Renewal in the 1950s through the 1960s.[29] These studies have helpfully brought to the fore the built environment's power to reify social and cultural beliefs.

However, these historians are only telling a later story of the segregated built environment's manifestations. The beginning of that story comes at the moment of southern industrialization in the 1880s. Dan River Mills and Schoolfield's story helps us understand that early history and offers a new periodization for the history of the segregated built environment. Bringing race to the fore in the historic narrative of southern industrialization, my dissertation shows that white supremacy was codified in the postbellum south in the everyday built environment such as schools, homes, streets, and recreation sites. These structures in mill villages ordered the world of an exclusively white

[28] Carl H. Nightingale, *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 5–6.

[29] Christopher Silver, "The Racial Origins of Zoning: Southern Cities from 1910–40," *Planning Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (May 1991): 189–205, https://doi.org/10.1080/02665439108725726; Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, First edition (New York; London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company, 2017); "Mapping Inequality," Digital Project. University of Richmond. https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/; "Urban Renewal, 1950-1966," Digital Project. University of Richmond. https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=0/0/1&viz=cartogram.

workforce, serving as the "the raw material for the symbols and collective memories of group communication," as urban planning scholar Kevin Lynch has noted.[30] The material permanence of Schoolfield buildings, streets, and landscapes served as daily reminders that, executives hoped, would reinforce the lie that textile work was inherently a white right.

Definitions

In discussing Dan River, I focus only the defining decades of the company's history from 1882 until 1931. From its founding in 1882 and until 2006, Dan River Mills produced fabric for home, such as bedsheets, pillowcases and the like, and apparel. An "original Southern company," Dan River was capitalized, founded, owned, led, and operated by white southerners in its first decades.[31] Under this southern leadership until 1931, the company grew to be the largest textile operation under one roof. The white executives who ran this company had dominion over two divisions, the first Riverside Division in downtown Danville and a Dan River Division just outside of the city boundaries. The Dan River Division was operated in Dan River's independent mill village of Schoolfield, where 5,000 white men, women, and children lived within the designed enclave controlled by company management.

I use the names Dan River Mills or Dan River throughout this dissertation as shorthand for the company that was known in the early twentieth century as "Riverside Cotton Mills," "Dan River Power & Manufacturing Company," and "Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills." The company was first founded in Danville in 1882 as the Riverside Cotton Mills, which produced cotton fabric along the Dan River that ran through the city. In 1895, the founders and chief stockholders of the Riverside Cotton Mills founded a second company, the Dan River Power & Manufacturing

[30] Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Publication of the Joint Center for Urban Studies (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 4.

[31] Mildred Gwin Andrews, *The Men and the Mills: A History of the Southern Textile Industry* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1987), 238.

Company, to generate new sources of power for the cotton mills along the same river beyond Danville city limits. Though separate entities, these two companies were run by the same men, uniting them in purpose and profit. These shared purposes and ownership were formalized in the eventual merger of these companies in 1909, creating the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills. Management for the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills corporation oversaw operations at the original 1882 Riverside Division in downtown Danville, and the new Dan River Division in the 1903 Schoolfield mill village. The company was renamed as Dan River Mills only after World War II. I use the shorter and out-of-period name "Dan River" not only for the reader's ease, but also because I focus on the company's Dan River Division in Schoolfield, rather than the Riverside Division that was located within Danville. The Riverside Division is not a focus of this dissertation as its scattered company housing exposed those workers to municipal and other outside influences, unlike the controlled environment of Schoolfield, which had a more robust building program carefully planned and executed in tandem with a centralized welfare scheme.

The built environment I discuss throughout this dissertation is not a term used in the period of this study, but rather is a contemporary term borrowed from the urban planning field. By built environment I refer generally to the structural fabric within which human activity takes place. Much more than just the public sphere, the built environment encompasses all ways that architecture shapes human activity and social goods. Scholar Bill Rohe, for example, noted that the planning profession itself is focused on organizing the built environment, motivated by a theory that unplanned development can lead to social ills such as "crime, poverty, political apathy and perceptions of powerlessness, economic marginalization, and environmental degradation."[32] For

[32] William M. Rohe, "From Local to Global: One Hundred Years of Neighborhood Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 75, no. 2 (March 27, 2009): 210, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360902751077.

many planners, the built environment is a powerful tool that can be the site of social ills but, if wielded properly, can encourage social cohesion and well-being.

In Schoolfield, the built environment was a key tool management had for solving the dual mission of denigrating Black workers and uplifting white workers. Management excluded Black workers from operative positions in the mills, and therefore housing in the village, and uplifted white workers through the modern dignity of industrial roles complete with the welfare amenities of that work. With total control over the layout and design of Schoolfield, Dan River management attempted to create a white community with the accoutrement attuned to white middle-class sensibilities. Undiluted by democratic governance and political processes, the village of Schoolfield was built under the singular control of the company. Because of this control, the built environment of the village could be planned deliberately, rather than adaptively as Danville. In Danville, other parties outside the company had a say in where and how buildings were built, but that was not the case in Schoolfield. With such deliberative design the Schoolfield village's architecture, setting, and the end use of its buildings combine as a rich text that showcases what values management held and inculcate in their workers. Even when these values fell short of translating into the mill community in collective acceptance, the built environment shows us a critical mechanism of white supremacy in the material investment for white uplift.

Sources and Methods

To write this dissertation, I relied on historical methods and urban planning practices to marry a historical narrative of Dan River Mills and Schoolfield with an analysis of Schoolfield's built environment. While a global pandemic interrupted my research in the spring, summer, and fall of 2020, my work as a participant observer in Schoolfield since 2010 and my studies of the village throughout my coursework at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have helped support the arguments in this dissertation. I was also able to rely on an increasingly dense digital resource

base including historical Sanborn maps from the Library of Congress and Salem, Virginia's public library system, local and national newspapers through Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com and the New York Times Machine. Additionally, having located and moved the Dan River Mills company archive from an attic in Danville to the Southern Historical Collection at Wilson Library in May of 2019, I was also able to scour its rich collection of executive correspondence, photographs, and original blueprints of Schoolfield's buildings and houses. My work in this dissertation was inspired by and grounded in oral histories that I collected in Schoolfield, those collected in the 1970s by the Southern Oral History Program, and interviews from a 1984 project by professors at Danville's Averett University. Wielding these diverse archival and digital resources, I have placed the built environment in conversation with past cultural studies of southern textiles. With these materials, I show how a capitalist enterprise wielded architectural solutions to address social problems of race in the postbellum south, influencing broader patterns of urban segregation in the south and the nation from the post-Civil War era well into the twentieth century.

Dissertation Overview

In the case of Dan River Mills, management used the social value of white community cohesion as an avenue toward company profit. At times, the built environment could encourage worker productivity and stability, but there were many instances when the value of these white millhands' well-being was at odds with the profit of the mill. The following chapters trace the ebb and flow of Dan River management's tandem effort to value whiteness through the company's initial founding in 1882 and in the 1903 planned community of Schoolfield until their paternalistic efforts unraveled with labor strikes over the winter of 1930 and 1931.

The first chapter argues that white elite founders in Danville wielded their social capital to change the economic status of white people in a majority Black tobacco town, which had relied heavily on Black labor. By founding Dan River Mills in 1882, Danville's leading industrialists and

businessmen also changed the racial makeup of the city by reserving textile work for white people only. By importing white workers from the farms of Appalachia and rural Virginia, the textile industry was a mechanism for diluting Danville's Black majority with an influx of white residents. This creation of a whole new industry in Danville led eventually to an overwhelming white majority population in a city that was once majority Black. By buoying local white merchants with a growing white population of millhands, Dan River Mills founding was intricately tied to the swift ousting in 1883 of a progressive biracial political coalition known as the Readjuster Party. Dan River's founding entrenched a white racial hierarchy in a city that had been on the verge of a more progressive future.

The second chapter argues that simply reserving the white right of textile labor was not enough to ensure the naturalization of white supremacy. To increase Danville's white population, Dan River management recruited the white "southern mountaineer" to work in its early Riverside Division mills and live scattered in makeshift company housing throughout Danville.[33] Yet these rough-hewn recruits retained backwards country customs that were at odds with management's Anglo-Saxon ideal. To maintain the economic and social value of whiteness, Dan River management had to ensure control over every aspect of workers' lives to train these mountaineers in the ways of Anglo-Saxon living. To accomplish this training, Dan River built the planned and exclusively white urban enclave of Schoolfield beginning in 1903. This urban enclave not only introduced new millhand recruits to industrial work, but also wielded urbanity as a recruitment tool, a showpiece of company benevolence, and as a shield that protected millhands from outside middle-class scorn and the company from the embarrassment of their workers' continued countrified culture.

To train their new millhands and their families, Dan River management also implemented an extensive welfare program in Schoolfield beginning in 1908, as the third chapter discusses. Dan

[33] Samuel Tyndale Wilson, *The Southern Mountaineers* (New York,1914; Internet Archive, 2008), http://archive.org/details/southernmountain00wils.

River's welfare program, enacted in interior feminine spaces of the village, was led by an emerging class of professional white women. These mostly single, childless white women practiced their marital and maternal duties in a professionalized domestic sphere of worker welfare. Entrusted with the welfare program, these women oversaw the mission of transforming white folk into Anglo-Saxon millhands whose homelife was as ordered and surveilled as their work life in the village under this system of industrial maternalism.

While welfare work went on in these feminine-led spaces, Dan River management made investments in the masculine spaces of the village, too. As I argue in the fourth chapter, to encourage male millhands to align with a southern, white masculine ideal, management southerned the landscape of the urban village. As historian Ed Ayers has argued, as the postbellum south bent towards industrialization many white elites invented a culture that celebrated the Confederacy and an "Old South" to counter the nationalizing effects of industrialization.[34] Employing this invented "Old South," Dan River's management embedded Confederate heritage in street appellations and performed rituals of masculinity in main streets in the village. Using the everyday built environment to invoke a legacy of the antebellum south, Dan River management married a New South urbanity with the racial hierarchy of the old.

Despite Dan River management's investment in these spaces of feminine-entrusted transformation and southern masculinity, the returns were disappointing. Instead of cultivating a loyal, stable labor force, management had effectively trained millhands in self advocacy. In the fifth chapter, I argue that workers attempted to cash in on the value of masculinity in real wages using the avenues of welfare that management had built to stabilize worker loyalty. One of management's biggest welfare investments that had disappointing returns was the company union program known as Industrial Democracy. Armed with the training Industrial Democracy had offered workers in

[34] Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 373.

organizing for collective action, millhands leveraged the programs and spaces of Schoolfield for their benefit.

As the textile market slumped in the late 1920s, management made severe cuts to workers' pay at Dan River Mills. Outraged, millhands struck. During the strike, which lasted four months over the winter of 1930-1931, pro-union workers claimed ownership over the spaces once dominated by the company. Centering the people within this built environment, this sixth and final chapter traces how workers attempted to take over the spaces of Schoolfield and reclaimed masculinity for their own benefit. Drawing from extensive reports from undercover Pinkerton operatives that recounted millhands' daily experiences, as well as letters workers wrote to management, this chapter centers workers as they fought against management for a decent wage and the respect they expected from management as fellow Anglo-Saxons.

Overall, this dissertation considers the racial legacy of southern industrialization as evidenced in the built environment. It takes the built environment of Schoolfield and its authors as central characters in this story but keeps in mind the people who used these spaces, and those who were excluded from them. This dissertation also offers another view of southern industrialization, one that acknowledges the textile industry's contribution to the maintenance of white supremacy in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 1: "TO BREAK [N]EGRO RULE": POWERING WHITE INDUSTRY, 1882-1903

Introduction

Before the Civil War, tobacco ruled Danville. Reliant upon slavery, the tobacco industry flourished in the town that became a hub in the broader network of tobacco towns in the American south. As emancipation and the ravages of the Civil War shattered the bedrock of slavery and agriculture for Danville's economy, local industrialists and businessmen turned to the gilded promises of a New South. Though these men welcomed the promise of new avenues for capital, they rejected the social order that the New South almost brought forth. Though civil rights amendments had not only ensured the end of slavery, but also briefly the citizenship of formerly enslaved Black men, white industrialists rejected the subsequent rise of freed Black people to an educated, financially independent status. In Danville in the 1880s, Black workers moved off the farms and into the city, founding self-sustaining neighborhoods like Liberty Hill, Almagro, and Holbrook-Ross. Black men and women built houses, schools, hospitals, shops, and churches and filled them with Black families, educators, doctors, merchants, and pastors.[1] As white merchants witnessed this success, they increasingly eyed the poor white farmer as an antidote. Seeing Black flourishing as taking away from these poor white farmers, white merchants rallied to violently reject the threat they saw to white affluence and power.

This chapter explores the founding of Dan River Mills in 1882 in conjunction with the moment of bi-racial progress and the subsequent Danville race "riot" of 1883. As Howard Winant

[1] Jane Elizabeth Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia*, Gender & American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 75.

argues, the confluence of racial violence with the birth of a new industry was nothing new in the long history of racial projects in America. From slavery to resistance against civil rights, Winant argues, racism in the United States can be understood as "a continuing struggle to allay fears about the instability of whiteness."[2] Dan River Mills' founding was fueled by one such anxious struggle.

The founders of Dan River Mills had social and economic motivations for starting the textile company. Some historians of the textile south insist economic conditions in the region heralded in the industry that had previously dominated New England. Hall and co-authors argue that cheap labor was the "foundation of the southern textile industry."[3] In Liston Pope's classic text *Millhands and Preachers* about millhands in Gastonia, North Carolina, he similarly ascribes "[h]uman resources" being crucial to the rise of textile mills, founded with economics as the southern industry's "basic motive."[4] Yet these basic motives are at odds with what one preacher described in the case of Dan River Mills. Some years after the mills were founded, a Danville preacher declared that Dan River Mills had been "Divine in its origin" and described its founders as "God's men."[5] Why might this preacher have tied such a seemingly dispassionate economic investment with a spiritual metaphor? The answer lies in the story of Dan River's founding, as white merchants believed manufacturing could redeem both the southern economy and the supremacy of the white race. This story begins with Danville's founding industry of tobacco, and the failure of tobacco to safeguard white supremacy as well as it did during slavery.

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[2] Howard Winant, "White Racial Projects," in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, ed. Birgit Brander Rasmussen et al. (Duke University Press, 2001), 97, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11sn1gq.8.

[3] Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 80.

[4] Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia*, Tenth (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 9, 19.

[5] "The Cotton Mill Industry in Danville [Response]," *The Times Dispatch*, November 6, 1905, 4, Newspapers.com.

Tobacco Destiny

Developed along the Dan River in southside Virginia, the City of Danville forged its growth with the cultivation, production, sale, and transport of tobacco. Founded as Wynne's Falls on land inhabited by the Occaneechi band of the Saponi nation, by the 1790s, Danville became a hub for white settlers whose poured investments into tobacco. In the state that produced at least seventy percent of the nation's tobacco before 1860, Danville served as a primary tobacco center of the south, linking white farmers in surrounding rural areas of Caswell County, North Carolina and Pittsylvania County, Virginia with markets in Lynchburg and Richmond, Virginia.[6] The hubs of Danville, Lynchburg, and Richmond relied on these white rural farmers and plantation owners, who in turn relied on enslaved Black labor to plant, cultivate, pull, and transport the tobacco, fueling this industry's success and filling white men's coffers.

Before the Civil War, some of the biggest enslavers and tobacco plantations in the south resided in southside Virginia. Enslavers like William T. Sutherlin and Samuel Hairston fed Danville's burgeoning tobacco market, fueling its growth by 1860 to the third largest tobacco manufacturing town in the nation and leading one historian to claim that "tobacco was destiny for Danville."[7] Only a "straggling village" in the early nineteenth century, Danville came to later prominence with the invention of Bright Leaf tobacco in Caswell County in 1839 and with the city's development of the "Danville system" of tobacco sales in the 1850s.[8] While Bright Leaf tobacco appealed to consumers, the Danville system appealed to corporate buyers and farmers in its revolutionized system of auctioning tobacco. Before the Danville system, buyers bought tobacco unseen and packed away in

[6] Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright*, 76.

[7] Henry Wiencek, *The Hairstons: An American Family in Black and White* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000); Frederick Siegel, *The Roots of Southern Distinctiveness: Tobacco and Society in Danville, Virginia, 1780-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 58.

[8] North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program, "Marker: G-5 Bright Leaf Tobacco" (North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1936), https://ncmarkers.com/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=G-5; Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright*, 139.

hogsheads, with only leaf samples to judge the quality. In 1858, Danville's auction warehouses began displaying the leaves in loose, open piles on warehouse floors, showcasing the quality of the tobacco.[9] Quickly becoming the preferred method of selling tobacco throughout the south, the Danville system similarly sensationalized tobacco sales in the city, which became community events where area farmers and townspeople would gather to inspect and buy tobacco and hear the auctioneer's chant.[10] The crop set the rhythm of Danville's antebellum urban life.

The American Civil War disrupted this initial tobacco boom, causing devastating economic loss. During the war, Danville's location along the Richmond-Danville railway and out of the way of battles, made it ideal for holding northern prisoners of war and the Confederate wounded. The tobacco warehouses that lined the downtown morphed into makeshift hospitals and prisons during the Civil War. After the Civil War during the Reconstruction Era from 1865-1877, Danville was briefly occupied by Union forces and then left to its own devices to rebound from its impoverished slavery-reliant economy. The devastation of Richmond and other hubs in the southern tobacco network briefly diminished white wealth.

But not too long after the Civil War, tobacco rebounded, lining more pockets in Danville. By 1884, Danville's tobacco manufacturing was booming. The city boasted twenty-five manufacturers of twist and plug tobacco, seventy-three prizing and brokers' houses, and three stripping and stemming establishments and with this economic growth the population of Danville grew, too, from just over 7,000 in 1880 to nearly 20,000 by 1900.[11] New neighborhoods such as "Millionaire's Row" near former enslaver William. T. Sutherlin's own mansion developed seemingly overnight, with

[9] Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, "Marker Q-5-d: Danville System" (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1965), https://vcris.dhr.virginia.gov/HistoricMarkers/.

[10] Sounds Around Virginia, *Tobacco Auction*, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROORHQMZrhY.

[11] Steve Gilliam, "Tobacco: Golden Leaf Brought City Fame and Fortune," *The Bee*, July 4, 1976, 61–62, Newspapers.com.

massive tobacco wealth fueling the swift construction of monstrously large homes that evidenced these new southern businessmen's financial success.

Yet much of the new mercantile elite's success rested on a bedrock of race. As much as tobacco, slavery had helped Danville reach its so-called "destiny" as a commercial and manufacturing center for tobacco. The tobacco industry's antebellum economic and social reliance on slavery in the rural surrounding areas before the Civil War was reflected in the City after emancipation. Formerly enslaved Black families had moved to Danville following emancipation, settling in areas such as Liberty Hill, Almagro, the downtown Warehouse District, Mechanicsville, and Holbrook-Ross to build wealth and community. Their flourishing brought about a Black majority population in Danville by the 1880s.[12] Many of these Black men and women continued to give their labor to the tobacco industry, which employed a majority Black workforce well into the twentieth century.[13]

Because of the nearly exclusive use of Black labor in the tobacco industry, first enslaved, and then free, white elites in post-bellum Danville started to worry that there was little economic opportunity left for the area's poor white families, who were usually overlooked for the seasonal work of leaf preparation in tobacco, which was traditionally offered to Black workers [14] The economic woes of rural white people dovetailed with their social and political minority in Danville, and white business elites sought new ways to reaffirm white supremacy in the tobacco town.

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[12] Ernest B. Furgurson, "Danville, Virginia: Hallowed Ground," Smithsonian Magazine, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/danville-virginia-hallowed-ground-75213622/; Terri L. Fisher and Kirsten Sparenborg, *Lost Communities of Virginia* (Earlysville, Va: Albemarle Books, 2011), 93; Katherine Coffield and Alison Stone Blanton, "108-5607 Mechanicsville Historic District," Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/108-5607/; Alison Stone Blanton, "108-0180 Holbrook-Ross Street Historic District," 1997, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/108-0180/.

[13] For more regarding the racial makeup of the tobacco industry, see Robert Rodgers Korstad, "Industrial and Political Revolutions," in *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 41–60; Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright*.

[14] Enstad, *Cigarettes, Inc*, 11.

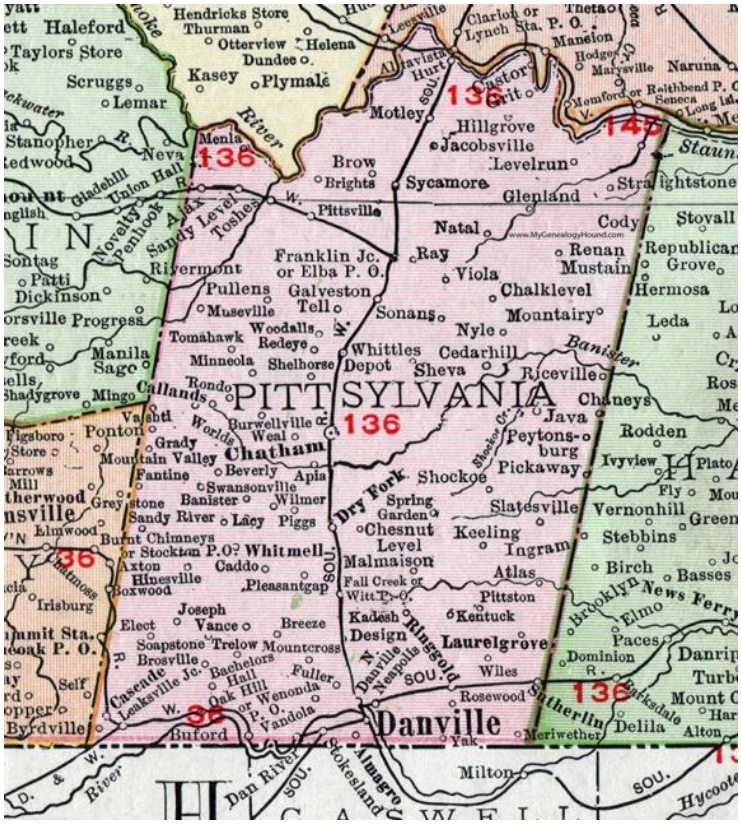

Figure 8. A 1911 map of Pittsylvania County and Danville, Virginia, just north of Caswell County in North Carolina. Until 1951, Schoolfield was an independent company town within the county, just south of Danville near the Stokesland area. "Pittsylvania County, Virginia, Map, 1911, Rand McNally, Chatham, Danville, Ringgold."

Dan River Mills' Founding

Despite knowing nothing about other industries beyond tobacco, despite the dearth of trained white labor, and despite "many other unfavorable conditions," a collection of Danville's white business elite invested in a cotton mill. This mill had the express purpose of providing economic and social success for the "poor [white] families of the community who were having a hard time."[15] In 1882, six white men including three brothers, Robert Addison Schoolfield, John Harrell and James Edward Schoolfield, as well as Benjamin Franklin Jefferson, Dr. Howson White Cole and Thomas Benton Fitzgerald started the Riverside Cotton Mills in Danville. These men were

[15] R.A. Schoolfield as quoted in Robert E. King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield (1853-1931): A Biographical History of the Leader of Danville, Virginia's Textile Mills During Their First 50 Years* (Richmond, Virginia: William Byrd Press, 1979), 42; H.R. Fitzgerald, Dan River Mills president to W.D. Anderson, April 13, 1928, as quoted in Robert S Smith, *Mill on the Dan: A History of Dan River Mills, 1882-1950* (Duke University Press, 1960; HathiTrust, 2020), 9, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x000314340;view=1up;seq=9.

all Virginians, and none had had experience in the textile industry. Yet as men of the mercantile class, they all had experience turning a profit, and knew the power of money to shape the social good of their kith and kin.

The Schoolfield brothers were among the most prominent of the mill's founders. The youngest, Robert Addison Schoolfield, who went by R.A. and "Ad," was born in 1853 on a farm near Martinsville in Henry County just west of Danville. With his older brothers James and John, Ad Schoolfield was raised almost entirely by his mother after his father, who had been a Methodist minister, died just two years after Ad Schoolfield's birth. When Ad was a child, the Civil War broke out and though he hardly saw a single soldier and never saw a battle, Schoolfield remembered the effect of the war, which devastated his family's finances. To right his family's income, Ad partnered with his older brother John to run a general store in Henry County when he was a young man. It was during his time as a storekeeper that Ad first traveled to Danville on his frequent trips to Richmond for supplies. He often stayed with his other older brother James, who had lived in Danville for some time as a merchant. James had also served in the Virginia State Legislature in the 1880s as a Democrat. As a Virginia delegate and businessman, James had demonstrated the potential success that a white man could have in the city and no doubt influenced Ad Schoolfield's eventual decision to move to Danville.

Besides his brother's influence, another event brought Ad Schoolfield's work and money to Danville. Before he moved to Danville around 1882, he suffered from an illness related to overwork at the general store. To regain his health, Schoolfield took a holiday to Columbus, Georgia in 1880 where he came to know the new-found monied prowess of the textile industry through observing the operations of the Eagle and Phoenix Mills. Schoolfield knew that Danville's Dan River that ran

could be a great source for powering textiles and he could similarly reap the profits of the Georgia textile company in his own native state.[16]

After his recovery in Georgia, Ad Schoolfield and his brother and business partner John moved to Danville. By the 1880s, all three brothers, Ad, John, and James were finding success in their own ways in the city. John set up a tobacco factory called Schoolfield & Watson, which manufactured tobacco with "uniform excellence."[17] Taking a respite from politics, James continued his successful hardware business, Schoolfield, Vass & Co., with his brother in-law, H.F. Vass. In addition to his successful business investments, James was also known for his religiosity and fervor as an evangelist and lay preacher. James Schoolfield traveled frequently from the rural reaches of North Carolina to West Virginia speaking "the gospel truth with power" to convert southern sinners and "backsliders" back to religion.[18]

These three Schoolfield brothers were leading white citizens in the city of Danville due to their various successful businesses and textile industry venture. Ad and James' economic strength in the city in the 1880s, however, was inseparable from their participation in the Danville race riot and success in re-establishing white, Democratic rule thereafter. To many of their fellow white businessmen, these Schoolfield brothers were the trusted allies of whiteness. With their business acumen, their religious bent, and their belief in white supremacy, the Schoolfields in name and heritage became leading investors in working white men and women's health, education, and morality with the founding of Dan River Mills in 1882.

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[16] For a more detailed biographical account of Schoolfield, see King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*, 1–20.

[17] As quoted from V.10, 3 of *Headlight: A Journal of Progress and Development* in King, 28.

[18] "The Meeting at Main Street," *Reidsville Review*, November 25, 1892, 3; "The Schoolfield Meeting," *The Concord Times*, September 20, 1894, 3, Newspapers.com; "Schoolfield Is Dead," *The Richmond Dispatch*, August 6, 1902, 1, Newspapers.com.

Their textile company, which would eventually come to be known as Dan River Mills, transformed raw cotton into cloth. Dan River Mills also transformed the early possibility of a progressive, biracial city into a hard reality of white men's rule. In a summary of the founding of Dan River Mills, Ad Schoolfield recalled that when the mills were started the year prior to the Danville race riot, he and other investors were not only "interested in developing the water power" but also "were anxious to bring white labor here to break the [N]egro rule."[19] Leading this company along with then-president Thomas Benton Fitzgerald, these executives actively recruited white farming families from North Carolina and the Appalachian regions of Virginia to make the transition to industrial work. These newly recruited, inexperienced millhands were not just cheap labor; these white men and women also served as what one historian described as a white "reserve army" against the threat of Reconstruction-era biracial governance.[20] This "army" of white workers curbed Black political power after the 1883 Danville race riot just eighteen months after the mills' founding.

Danville Race Riot

With a business that promised to redeem the poor white southerner, by 1883 Danville's white elites were emboldened to do something about what they saw as a very distressing race situation. To the dismay of these white elites, in the 1880s Danville's local government had pushed for Black Danvillians to take on leadership roles in the city under the rule of the Readjusters. The Readjusters were a progressive, biracial political coalition that held political power in Danville in the 1880s and had a political following in the state. Led by William Mahone, a Confederate veteran turned progressive leader, the Readjusters took their name from their calls to readjust Virginia's war

[19] R.A. Schoolfield, "The Danville Political Situation in 1883," n.d., Robert Addison Schoolfield Papers, 1855-1973, Accession #10325 in Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

[20] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 9.

debt to the federal government. Virginia had lost much of its taxable property—enslaved people—with emancipation and there was little way of bringing the state's debt in hand through tax revenue, though the conservative Democratic Party stood firm for full repayment. The Democrats' plan would have crippled funding for public goods and services, such as education. In contrast to the Democrats, the Readjusters wanted to cancel the debt to make state funds available for public schools for both Black and white children.[21] The Readjusters stance on racial equality and public education enraged the white elite merchant class in Danville, who saw public education as a fanciful idea and racial integration as a dangerous one. Incensed Democratic merchants derided Readjusters in an incendiary public complaint known as the Danville Circular.

In this Danville Circular, white elites who had gained their wealth, either directly or indirectly, from tobacco falsely bemoaned the "injustice and humiliation" of white Danvillians under the "domination and misrule of the radical or [N]egro party," as they derided the Readjusters.[22] In a letter printed throughout the state in the fall of 1883, twenty-eight members of Danville's white merchant and manufacturing elite class listed the ways in which biracial rule had devastated Danville. Written out in the Danville Circular, these men's complaints appealed to the white citizenry of south and southwest Virginia, where Readjusters had a foothold. In this Danville Circular, the authors claimed that Black citizens had paid little taxes to support the development of the city and were allegedly siphoning off city funds from white people for the education of Black children.

In addition to this apparent extravagance, the letter decried the Black men who occupied leadership positions throughout the city. At this time, Danville's mayor John H. Johnston was

[21] For more on the Readjuster party in Virginia, see Brent Tarter, *A Saga of the New South: Race, Law, and Public Debt in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016); Dailey, *Before Jim Crow*; Charles Chilton Pearson, *The Readjuster Movement in Virginia* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1917).

[22] W.T. Clark et al., "Coalition Rule in Danville," *Staunton Vindicator*, October 1883, Special Collections, Library of Virginia.

Black.[23] Out of the city's nine policemen, four were Black, two to guard the streets of Danville, one to serve as the public health officer and one to serve as clerk of the market in downtown Danville, which meant he oversaw market stalls, often offering many of these stalls to Black salesmen and farmers. With Black leadership at the market, an economic hub of Danville, the white mercantile elite complained that their "polite white gentlemen with their clean, white aprons" had been ousted from twenty of the market's twenty-four stalls, which were rented to Black butchers, merchants, and farmers. Under Black rule, the authors argued, the city's market became the scene "of filth, stench...idle [N]egroes, drunkenness, [and] obscene language," that cut at white merchants and farmers' profits as well as their "honor" and pride.[24] By listing alleged outrages of Black rule, these men hoped they could convince their "fellow [white] citizens" to vote Democratic in local elections to be held on November 6, 1883.[25] Among the nearly thirty authors of the Danville Circular was James Edward Schoolfield, one of the three Schoolfield brothers who founded Dan River Mills.

Though he did not sign the Danville Circular, James's brother Ad Schoolfield showed a similar commitment to white economic and political control during political violence that came about as a response to the Danville Circular. On November 3, 1883, just days before a local election, angry white mobs confronted Black Danvillians in what became known as the "Danville race riot." Though the violence was later blamed on Black participants, the real origins of the riot began with white anger and perceived white victimization in a Black-majority town under biracial rule.

White men like in the city had been running hot since the previous Friday evening, when a white Readjuster, a Confederate veteran named William E. Sims, publicly denounced the Danville Circular in front of a "vast crowd of Africans" gathered on the Danville courthouse steps. To some

[23] King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*, 31.

[24] Clark et al., "Coalition Rule in Danville."

[25] Clark et al.

white male Danvillians, it seemed Sims wanted to "inflame the minds of the [N]egroes" against those who had written the Danville Circular. One incensed white witness testified that Sims had even deigned to call the Danville Circular writers to be "liars, scoundrels, and cowards." This witness angrily recounted how the crowd of Black Danvillians were "yelling their applause with hellish delight," as Sims derided the circular writers who other whites deemed "our good and honorable white citizens."[26]

With white men outraged at Sims's degradation of their "most respected [white] citizens," tensions ran high in the city on Saturday, when a Black man, Hense Lawson, brushed by a white man, Charles Noell, along Main Street in downtown Danville. Noell was immediately enraged by Lawson, who had not stepped down from the sidewalk as Noell passed him. According to Noell's own testimony, after a brief physical scuffle between the two men, Noell gathered his white friends to confront and further intimidate Lawson.[27] When the two men found each other again that afternoon, they each brought their own posse: Noell with twenty-five white men, and Lawson with about one hundred Black men. In later testimony collected by local politicians, witnesses to the confrontation contradicted each other about who was armed, or who fired the first shots, but according to one Black policeman present, the white men shot into the air first to disperse the crowd of Black men. Once those first shots were fired, shooting seemed to occur on both sides, leaving at least one white man and four Black men dead and more injured.[28] Following this shootout,

[26] P. Bouldin's account of W.E. Sims's speech is found in the local report on the riot undertaken by Danville city officials. W.T. Sutherlin et al., *Danville Riot: Report of Committee of Forty with Sworn Testimony of Thirty-Seven Witnesses, &c.* (Richmond, Virginia: Johns & Goolsby, Book and Job Printers, 1883; HathiTrust, 2011), 13–14, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t9d50x307.

[27] Accounts conflict as to how many white and Black men were present. Most white witnesses to the "riot" cite being overwhelmed by around three hundred Black men to fifteen white. However, of the few Black witnesses that testified, a police officer Walter Withers swore to there being seventy-five or one hundred Black men who gathered in opposition to a group of twenty-five armed white men. Sutherlin et al., 36.

[28] See Walter Withers's account in Sutherlin et al., 36.

the Black mayor Johnston, called in the local militia known as the "Danville Grays" to patrol the streets.[29]

Other white citizens joined the Grays in the days leading up to what they thought would be a contentious election.[30] In the days before the Tuesday election, mill founder Ad Schoolfield stepped in with other white Danvillians to "control the situation." With other white citizens, Ad patrolled the streets after the riot, armed with "a big pistol buckled around me and a gun on my shoulder" making sure that when the day of the election came there were "practically no [N]egroes voting."[31] Along with the Danville Grays, Schoolfield's militant behavior was shared by many other white men in the city, who feared a Black revolt as they themselves suppressed the vote with violence and intimidation.

These men's suppression tactics worked. The poll tally for the 1883 election showed that only 31 of the 1,300 Black voters registered had submitted ballots.[32] Thus, the swift reestablishment of white, Democratic political rule followed this 1883 coup in Danville. The violence of this event, publicized across the nation, effectively dismantled the hope of progressive, biracial governance in Danville and southwestern Virginia under the Readjuster Party.[33] *The Washington Post* lauded the return of southern Democratic control as nothing less than "an uprising of the [white] people."[34] As

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[29] See Exhibit C.G.F.1 Sutherlin et al., 31–32.

[30] "Armed Men in Virginia: Probability of Bloodshed at the Polls To-Day," *New York Times*, November 6, 1883, 5, New York Times Timesmachine.

[31] Schoolfield, "The Danville Political Situation in 1883."

[32] Edward L. Ayers and John C. Willis, eds., *The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 142.

[33] The most prominent coverage came from Richmond and Washington D.C., and even the New York Times and the Atlanta Constitution also mentioned the ousting. "The Danville Riot," *Richmond Dispatch*, November 4, 1883, 2, Newspapers.com; "Armed Men in Virginia: Probability of Bloodshed at the Polls To-Day"; "Paeans of Praise: The Rejoicings Sent up by Redeemed Virginians.," *The Washington Post*, November 11, 1883.

[34] "Paeans of Praise."

the returns came in after November 6th demonstrating Democratic victories, the mouthpiece of the New South, *The Atlanta Constitution*, celebrated with the headline: "Virginia Redeemed."[35] A day after the riot, the editors of the *Richmond Dispatch* published a brief note to "furnish to our readers...the feeling of the people of the State" in regard to Danville. "Every white man's blood has boiled," the writers declared, when the Danville Circular had accounted for the "indignities" white people allegedly suffered under Black leaders who had "come to regard themselves as...the rightful rulers of the town." The writers applauded the recent efforts by white men like Ad Schoolfield who had "taught a lesson" to Black Danvillians and "their race elsewhere in Virginia."[36] Not only had the violence taught Black Danvillians to "resume, contentedly, their own legitimate position in the social scale," had also ousted Danville's Black leaders from their political posts and gave Democrats the majority in both houses of the General Assembly.[37] The lesson of the Danville race riot was clear: Danville, Virginia was a white man's city and Virginia was a white man's state.[38] Without the system of slavery to keep Black Virginian's in their "legitimate position" in white Virginian's imagined racial hierarchy, white men found alternate ways—in this case through violence and intimidation—to keep Black people in their social caste.

In the following two decades after the Danville race riot, men like Ad Schoolfield and his brother James continued to teach their "lesson" to area Black citizens through the recruitment of a white labor force that soon overwhelmed Danville's population. Dan River Mills management

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[35] "Virginia Redeemed," *Shenandoah Herald*, November 21, 1883, 2, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Library of Congress.

[36] "The Danville Riot," 2.

[37] Brendan Wolfe, "Danville Riot (1883)," in *Encyclopedia Virginia*, n.d., https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Danville_Riot_1883; Edward Pollock, *Illustrated Sketch Book of Danville, Virginia; Its Manufactures and Commerce*, 1885; Walter T. Calhoun, "The Danville Riot and Its Repercussions on the Virginia Election of 1883," in *Studies in the History of the South, 1875-1922*, ed. Joseph F. Steelman (Greenville, North Carolina: East Carolina College, 1966), 25–51.

[38] The next Black mayor of Danville was Charles H. Harris, elected in 1980. "Mapping Local Knowledge: Danville, Virginia 1945 - 1975," http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/cslk/danville/bio_hughes.html.

worked earnestly in these years to recruit and retain white people to boost a majority white population in the city and in the surrounding county of Pittsylvania. With the growth in an industry committed to only hiring white workers in operative positions, the city's white population overwhelmed the once-Black majority. In 1880, Black residents made up two-thirds of city residents and just over half of county residents. By 1910, that majority had shrunk in the city to just thirty-two percent and in the county to thirty-nine percent.[39] Ad Schoolfield himself believed this surge in white people was one of the "many benefits" of the Danville mills.[40] The mills had brought in "[t]housands of people" who could be counted "among our best citizens," Schoolfield wrote in one recollection of his company's founding.[41]

These so-called "best citizens" segregated themselves according to their work as the hard lines of community and institutional segregation were drawn in Danville in the 1880s and 1890s with the diverging industries of the city. The emergent textile mills, reliant on white labor and waterpower, followed the curve of the Dan River in the core of downtown. In what would become known as the Riverside Division, textile mills, dyehouses, warehouses, and workers housing sprawled both the northern and southern banks of the Dan River, with dams jutting across the river to harness the river's power. White millhands mostly lived in houses nestled on hillsides north of the river in North Danville, or Neapolis as it was known before annexed by the city of Danville in 1896. In contrast, the Black labor reliant tobacco industry's various prizeries, warehouses, and workers housing spilled south of the river into Danville's downtown streets along Colquhoun, Craghead, Bridge, and Main streets. Black tobacco workers lived in small cottages near their work in western

[39] U.S. Census Bureau. Pittsylvania County, Virginia, T6-Race Population, 1880. Prepared by Social Explorer, https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1880/R12744542. U.S. Census Bureau. Danville, Virginia, T9-Race Population, 1910. Prepared by Social Explorer, https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1910/R12744570.

[40] Robert Addison Schoolfield, "Notebook of Business Correspondence and Other Writings of Robert Addison Schoolfield (1853-1931)" (Bland Church; Robert E. King, 1979), 7, National Tobacco and Textile Museum.

[41] Schoolfield, 7.

and southwestern sections of town. Main Street was reserved for Danville's white elite with only a one secondary street stemming into a Black professional neighborhood of Holbrook-Ross, which is where many of the most prominent Black families lived in the city. Divided by work and neighborhoods, Danville's people were divided by the same the industries that fueled the city's growth at the turn of the century.

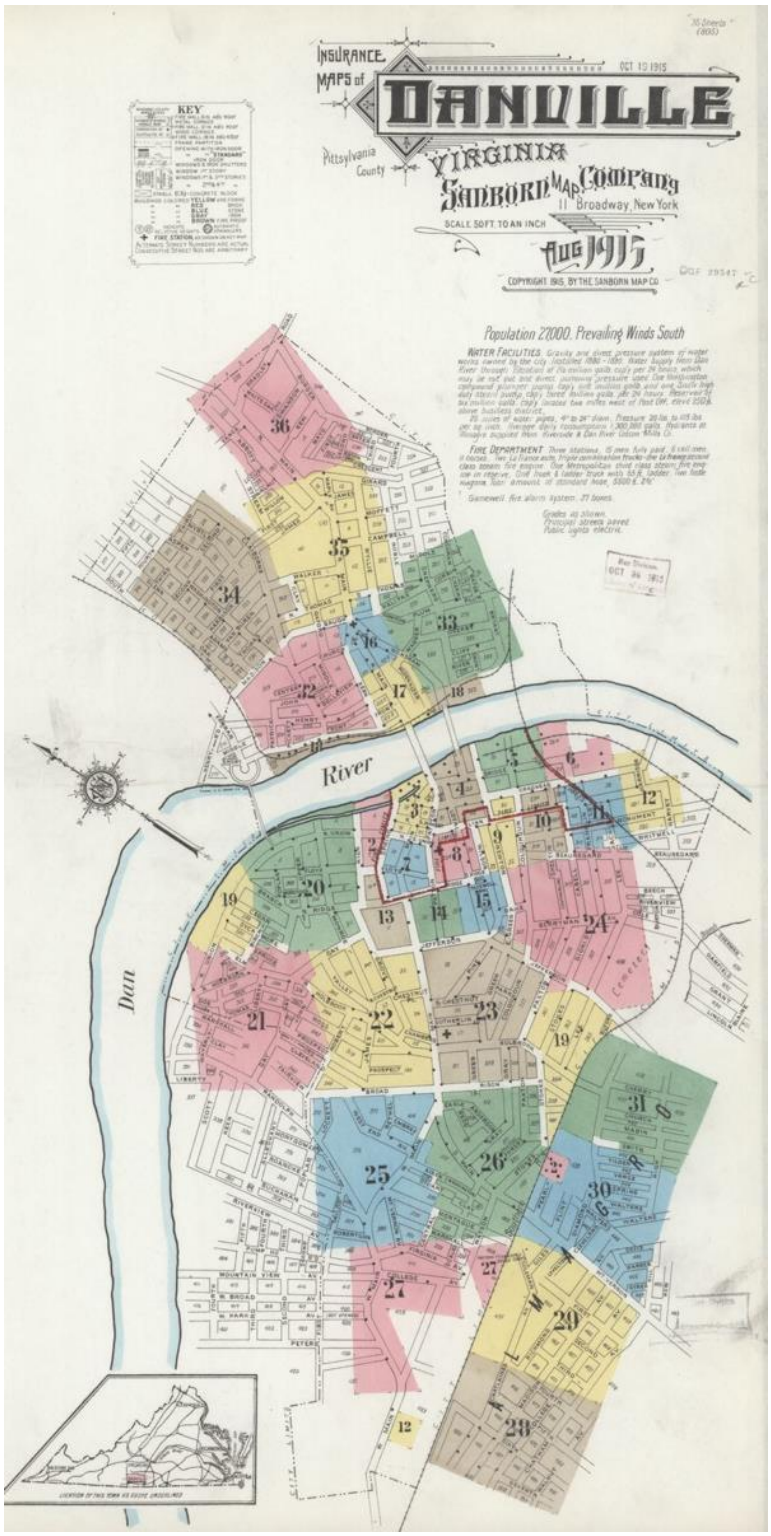

Figure 9. A 1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance map of Danville, Virginia. Most of the mill's early activity was located in sections 2, 20, 32, and 18. Much of the tobacco industry's activity was southwest in sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, & 12. Black neighborhoods were mostly in section 20 (Mechanicsville), Section 21 and 22 (Holbrook-Ross), and 28-31 (Almagro). Sanborn Map Co. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Danville." 100ft to 1in. Sanborn Map Co., 1915. Library of Congress.

Conclusion

Just eighteen months after Dan River's founding in 1882, violence and intimidation ousted the biracial, progressive rule of the Readjuster Party in Danville. The confluence of the mills' founding and the coup against biracial rule is not accidental. Nor is whiteness incidental to the story of southern industrialization. The mills were founded by the same white business families who cried out as if they were victims of Black oppression in the Danville Circular. Their lies of Black misrule incited the white violence in the streets of Danville on November 3, 1883 in what would become known as the Danville race riot. Mill founder Ad Schoolfield took part in patrolling the streets in the aftermath of this violence with a gun, threatening Black Danvillians and suppressing their political voice. Schoolfield's efforts, along with his brother James and other white Danville merchants, suppressed Black suffrage, civic engagement, and economic opportunity. Effectively redrawing the lines of an antebellum racial hierarchy, Schoolfield and other white men curbed racial progress wielding violence, intimidation, and a racially discriminatory new industry. This new industry of textiles would hold the line on the racial integration for years to come.

The founding of Dan River Mills set a foundation for a reversal of the progressive path the Readjusters attempted to pave in Danville. Dan River's subsequent profits and its swelling recruitment of white millhands would go on to fuel an independent mill village. Beyond Danville's city boundaries, the village of Schoolfield would be one dedicated to protecting and cultivating whiteness, continuing the project of Dan River's founders.

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING A WHITE URBAN ENCLAVE: SCHOOLFIELD MILL VILLAGE, 1903-1920

Introduction: The Problem with White Work

Creating employment for white workers who could overwhelm a Black racial majority in Danville was not enough to realize the vision of an orderly and deserving white workforce. Having a white workforce brought its own set of problems, as company president Robert Addison Schoolfield complained. Since its founding in 1882, Dan River Mills had struggled with an "uncertain, migratory" set of workers who remained difficult to train and even harder to keep at the company.[1] The mill's profit and productivity were only as good as the reliability and loyalty of its workers, who were unwieldy since they had been living "scattered over the different sections of the city" such as North Danville and Mechanicsville.[2] These urban denizens were harder to keep a hold of, harder to watch, harder to control beyond the ten to twelve-hour work day. Their habits in a "long chain of evils and vice" were only exacerbated by living in proximity to downtown Danville's "tenderloin district," which was rife with prostitution, gambling and drinking.[3] Having workers spread out in an uncontrolled urban setting was not conducive to productive work for the mill or for the expectations of American whiteness for the mill workers.

Threatening further the expectation of white, orderly, but at-will millhands was unionization efforts among Dan River mill workers themselves. Between 1900 and 1901, Dan River executives

[1] R.A. Schoolfield as quoted in King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*, 42.

[2] H. R. Fitzgerald to R.M. Stimson, September 26, 1917, Box 26, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[3] Fitzgerald as quoted in Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 108; Frankie Y Bailey and Alice P Green, *Wicked Danville: Liquor and Lawlessness in a Southside Virginia City* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2011), 57–59.

had a close call with "militant textile locals" at the company's Riverside Division.[4] These millhands demanded better pay, shorter work hours, and were willing to pledge fidelity to the National Union of Textile Workers to realize their demands.[5] Dan River management's response was to immediately concede to workers' demands, though without acknowledging the union.[6] Management claimed their own beneficence when they cut short the twelve-hour work day to eleven hours, even as they fervently sought new avenues for control over their labor force. Ultimately, these early organizing efforts at Dan River were not broadly successful in establishing a union stronghold. However, management learned a lesson from these workers' attempts: the company needed to find new ways to garner and deepen workers' loyalty and stabilize their labor.[7] Like northern industrialists before them, Dan River management turned to urban planning of company-controlled mill villages to encourage workers' corporate loyalty by diminishing the influence of "outsiders."[8] Outsiders could include Black people and non-native born workers, and northerners—anyone who threatened to disrupt, either by unionizing or, if Black, by fraternizing with white workers.[9] Through hiring practices that excluded Black workers from operative positions and therefore from urban amenities

[4] McLaurin, *Paternalism and Protest*, 161.

[5] McLaurin, 161–62.

[6] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 151.

[7] For a more detailed account of the strike and NTWU efforts to gain a foothold in the southern piedmont, see McLaurin, *Paternalism and Protest*, 162–68; and Tom Tippett, "Chapter X: The Danville Strike," in *When Southern Labor Stirs* (New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, 1931).

[8] The most famous among these corporate attempts at community building is the town of Pullman, Illinois. Stanley Buder, *Pullman: An Experiment in Industrial Order and Community Planning 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Carl S. Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman* (Chicago: Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), https://catalog.lib.unc.edu/catalog/UNCb8045339; "The Pullman State Historic Site: The Town of Pullman," http://www.pullman-museum.org/theTown/.

[9] As the authors of Like a Family note, Dan River Mills never hired Black men in operative positions, and when the mill's Riverside Division attempted to hire German workers, native workers went on strike in protest. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 66, 110.

of village life, Schoolfield was designed to keep these outsiders out for good and manage those who resided within.

As a planned development just beyond Danville's city limits, Schoolfield broke ground in 1903 as an all-white enclave that could shape the behavior of its white mill residents and manage completely the contact between Black and white people in the area. Through entirely new construction, Dan River Mills management excluded Black workers from the village's residential and social life, effectively inventing a raced space of whiteness. This new industrial enclave created a white landscape in resistance to Black expression and claims to public space that were seen as unwelcome harbingers of social equality by Danville's white elites.[10] In the brick grandeur of the Schoolfield mills, the largess of community and social buildings, and in the tidy, ordered construction of workers housing, churches, schools, and streets, mill management attempted to retain their rural white recruits. In Schoolfield, management lured millhands with the promises and in many cases, the reality of decent housing, social privilege, community cohesion, and economic opportunity.[11]

Finding the Village Site

After difficulty finding a location for a new mill division within Danville limits, Ad Schoolfield obtained land for Dan River Mills in Pittsylvania County, beyond the control and

[10] The creation of Schoolfield was similar in this respect to the codification of a heroic white Confederate narrative perpetuated in the same era through monuments placed prominently amidst the civic landscape, as Fitzhugh Brundage explores. W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 10; Black communities practiced their own cultural resistance against white elite's attempt to "stifle Black expression and obliterate Black claims to public space," as Elijah Gaddis traced in his dissertation. Elijah Gaddis, "Processional Mobility and Celebratory Culture in Black North Carolina, 1865-1945" (PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2017), 4, ProQuest (AAT 10267182).

[11] In my analysis of Schoolfield's urban environment, I borrow from Robert Weyeneth's conceptual framework of raced space. Weyeneth defines raced space as an invention of the twentieth century planning field that adapted old buildings and created new ones in line with the emergence of Jim Crow in custom and law. Robert R. Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past," *The Public Historian* 27, no. 4 (2005): 13, 25, https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2005.27.4.11.

regulation of the City.[12] In addition to "the old Graves place" and property belonging to the Garvin family, he also secured the Noell family property that ran south and north along either side of the Southern Railway tracks.[13] The resultant village of Schoolfield was also developed partially on land that mill owners coerced a prominent Black family to sell to the company, according to one family account. In a 1973 letter requesting acknowledgement of his family's removal from the land, George Adams IV explained the story to the executive director of Virginia's Department of Historic Resources. Adams appealed to the director to have a historical marker placed on his family's land, citing a story passed down to him by his great-grandfather, George Adams, a prominent Black man in post-emancipation Danville. Adams had participated in the 1883 race riot by attempting to quell angry white men who wanted the Readjuster Party ousted. Citing family history, Adams IV stated that in the years following, mill executives forced his grandfather to give up the large farm he owned, which was on property just north of the railroad.[14] The story of George Adams IV was unfortunately a common one. When Dan River expanded its village in the 1910s, the company again forced out Black residents whose land the powerful company had acquired.[15]

The disregard for Black property led one historian of the company to remark in 1960 that "[i]t hardly needs to be mentioned that [Schoolfield] was an all-white settlement."[16] Dan River management's acquisition of Black land at the turn of the century was part of a broader strategy to

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[12] Nell Collins Thompson, *Echoes from the Mills* (Roanoke, Virginia: Toler Printing Co., 1984), 1; Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 67–72.

[13] R.A. Schoolfield to W.V. Garvin, August 30, 1902, Box 51, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[14] George Adams IV to Junius Fishburne, November 12, 1973, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond. While the Historic Resources staff who Adams corresponded with recognized the importance of the history of the race riot, the department could not come up with the $400 needed to erect a historical marker. A historical marker, incidentally, stands in the center of Schoolfield, marking the tight-knit history of that neighborhood without acknowledging who was excluded from this family of textiles.

[15] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 257.

[16] Smith, 257.

intentionally create a white community. As Smith asides, the whiteness embedded in the village swiftly became a fact hardly worth mentioning as the exclusive use of this urban built environment by white workers had by 1960 naturalized the whiteness of that cotton mill community.

Schoolfield Overview

Schoolfield was one of many modern mill villages that emerged in tandem with southern industrialization as a distinct urban form.[17] Schoolfield's buildings were characteristic of other model company towns that offered industrial work at a central mill site and a dense residential area filled with homes within walking distance to the mills. The most developed company towns, like Schoolfield, similarly had a company store, churches, schools, medical clinics, recreational and social buildings, baseball fields, and parks to ensure community cohesion by design.[18] Mill management developed Schoolfield as an urban enclave with interconnected industrial, commercial, and residential land uses. When the village came to inhabit over 5,000 people living over a square mile Schoolfield decidedly became an urban place, intentionally created and populated with white workers and their families.

At the height of its development by 1920, the village sprawled over a hilltop two miles southwest from the downtown core of Danville. Though adjacent to the city line, Schoolfield was almost entirely separated from the City of Danville by Ballou Park, a large municipally owned park that sat at the eastern edge of the village. The northern boundary of the village was fixed by the curve of the Dan River. At this northern boundary of the village the first structures were erected around 1903—a reservoir, dam, and powerhouse to fuel the industrial machinery of the mills. The only paved road in the village was West Main Street, a main arterial road that bisected the village

[17] Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*, 1.

[18] Crawford, "Earle S. Draper and the Company Town in the American South," 144.

along an east-west axis and connected Schoolfield with greater Danville. West Main Street boasted some of Schoolfield's finest housing, impressive community buildings, and bustling commercial stores. Just south of and running parallel to West Main Street, were the tracks of the Southern Railway, which bisected the village on an East-West axis. While most of the early residential sections of the village were nestled on streets close to the mill site on the northern side of the tracks and West Main Street, the majority of churches and workers housing was built in later phases in the 1910s in the southern belly of the village. The long southern residential streets positioned residents not in connection to one another but pointed instead to the authority of the mills along West Main Street.

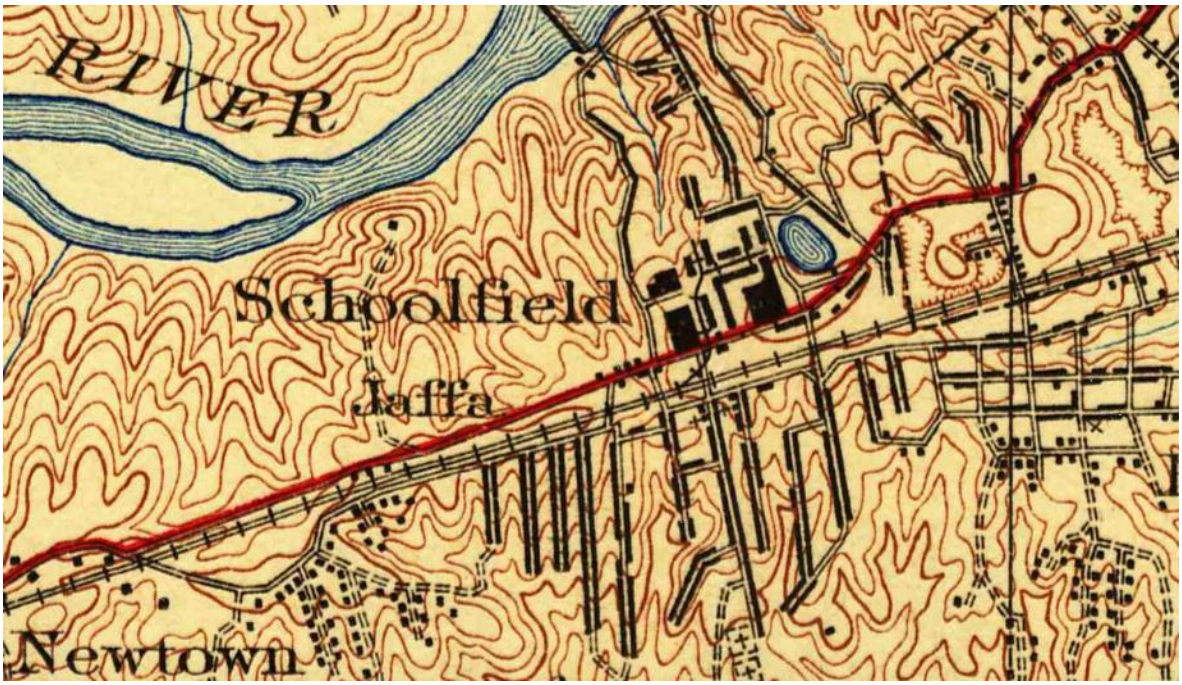

Figure 10. In the topographical map above, the Schoolfield mill site can be seen on a high, flat plat of what was otherwise a very hilly area. The red line indicates West Main street, with residential streets running perpendicular to the south and the other residences on the west and eastern sides of the mill site. US Dept. of the Interior, Topographical Map of Danville, Va, 1925.

To maintain the image of a tidy, respectable working village without relying too heavily on the performance of such by its inhabitants, management showcased only a portion of its investments in the built environment of Schoolfield. The most visible areas of the village were at Schoolfield's

highest topographical points on its eastern boundary and along the central main East-West corridor of Schoolfield along West Main Street. These areas, which boasted electric-lit paved streets, stylish architecture in houses and community, industrial, and commercial buildings showcased the village's urban amenities to outsiders and millhands alike. The buildings constructed in these prominent areas were wielded by management as tools that could help them accomplish three main goals. These urban amenities were used for recruiting white millhands from the far rural reaches of the south, as a showpiece of Dan River's impressive investment in industrial welfare, and as a shield that protected working-class millhands from white middle-class scorn.

Urban amenities were the markers of millhands' racial privilege. In this environment, management hoped that white workers would stay at the company by enticing them to an urban community. This community was one that granted management control over workers' everyday lives in exchange for offering millhands the privileges of economic and social opportunity. The word "urban" is an ambiguous term today, with implications of race and social status, but to urban planning scholars and historians the word can be defined a number of ways.[19] The United States Census Bureau has defined urban since 1910 as simply a place with a population of at least 2,500 people.[20] Planning scholars and social scientists have defined urban according to measures of spatial expanse, total population, residential density, global and regional context, as well as interconnected

[19] Steven Gregory contests media portrayals of "black urban identity" which underscore "a radical socioeconomic and moral rupture between an inner-city [Black] underclass, typically defined in relation to deviant values and behaviors" and a "a shapeless American mainstream" culture. Gregory, *Black Corona*, 12; Stephen Haymes disrupts the popularized myths of Black urbanism, arguing that scholars have racialized Black spaces, linking Black residential areas to segregated ghettos and inner-city areas while leaving the phenomenon of concentrations of white residential areas, such as suburbs, unidentified as segregated spaces of intentional creation. Haymes, *Race, Culture, and the City: A Pedagogy for Black Urban Struggle* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1995), 8.

[20] Michael Ratcliffe, "A Century of Delineating A Changing Landscape: The Census Bureau's Urban and Rural Classification, 1910 to 2010" (U.S. Census Bureau, Geography Division, n.d.), 2, https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/ua/Century_of_Defining_Urban.pdf.

land use.[21] Sociologists early on centered definitions of urban areas with cities, or those "relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement[s] of heterogenous individuals."[22] Historians have similarly linked a city's distinctive sprawling heterogeneity with urbanity.[23] A city is, broadly speaking, one of a diversity of uses and inhabitants and with at least 2,500 inhabitants.

These definitions do little to help deepen an understanding of the cultural effects of urbanity, especially in the context of the United States' two industrializing movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Southern historian Richard Wade helpfully offered a cultural context of American urbanization, which occurred in tandem with industrialization. According to Wade, because of these two combined phenomena, early American historians like Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles Beard saw urbanity as the end of an "evolutionary process" and conceptually tied urban growth to American progress and modernity.[24] In line with this idea of progress, modernity, and urbanity, Dan River Mills started Schoolfield as a demonstrative village that showcased a complementary modernity in tandem with the company's modern machinery. At Dan River Mills, management extolled Schoolfield not as a paternalistic scheme to control workers, but as an edifying, modern environment that offered millhands a taste of progress that mirrored their own rise from agricultural labor to a white dependable and productive citizenry.

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[21] Arthur C. Nelson, "The New Urbanity: The Rise of a New America," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 626 (2009): 192.

[22] Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (1938): 1.

[23] Carl Abbott, "Thinking about Cities: The Central Tradition in U.S. Urban History," *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 6 (September 1996): 687–701, https://doi.org/10.1177/009614429602200602.

[24] Richard C. Wade, "Urbanization," in *The Comparative Approach to American History* (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1997; ProQuest Ebook Central), 189, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=272850.

Recruiting the Southern Mountaineer

Those who peopled this urban environment were just as carefully curated as the village itself, and certainly not as diverse as less controlled urban centers like Danville were. Dan River management recruited, in particular, the white "southern mountaineer" a socially invented breed of whiteness applauded as the best manpower an employer could hope to have.[25] Isolated on Appalachian farms, the southern mountaineer had retained the so-called "rugged strength of his race" which included the "best possible racial heritage" such as "virile Scotch-Irish" in addition to English and Huguenot. While not elite, these rugged mountain people had the "rich red Teutonic and Celtic blood" that wove the genealogical fabric of "American greatness" and endowed this supposedly pure, rugged folk with a natural potential.[26] Though these mountain men and women seemed boorish and uncouth, the myth of their innate potential and racial purity, perpetuated in books that offered a framework of this white ethnic strain, convinced management that these people's potential only needed to be tapped through productive work to see their true American greatness.

Guided by this theory of innate white supremacy and ethnic purity, Dan River heavily recruited workers from the mountains and rural areas of North Carolina and Virginia for the purest of this supposedly powerful ilk of the great American white. Management enticed desirable white operatives through local newspaper advertisements and recruiters as they developed the first mills and residences in Schoolfield. Through the fall of 1906, Dan River management placed advertisements in newspapers in places like Richmond, Virginia and Asheville and Henderson, North Carolina. Some advertisements simply stated that operatives were wanted and showcased the

[25] See Wilson, *The Southern Mountaineers* for an early historical account of these so-called southern mountaineers. A more recent popular historical account by Congressman James Webb follows similar contours as Wilson's 1914 laudation of this particular white ethnic strain. James Webb, *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America* (New York: Broadway Books, 2004).

[26] Wilson, *The Southern Mountaineers*, 160–61.

urban amenities that came with textile work. Dan River promised "[s]plendid school facilities" and "special attention...to sanitary conditions" in addition to offering inexperienced operatives pay while they learned their new industrial tasks.[27] Other advertisements asked for "200 families" of "good, reliable people" to apply to work at Dan River and live in Schoolfield.[28]

Dan River's recruitment advertisements differed from other mills', which often only gestured to workplace amenities and did not appeal directly to workers' self-image. One mill in Alexandria, Virginia, for instance, directed the attention away from the worker and to the factory as a "flourishing institution" in their advertisement for more operatives.[29] In the *Atlanta Constitution,* mill owners in Thomaston, Georgia advertised for "good families" which they clarified as "spinners, doffers, and spooler hands."[30] In another advertisement in the *Atlanta Constitution* for a New England mill, the owners sought to steal away workers to the north where they could receive "high wages, [and] short hours."[31] Even when some advertisements mentioned workplace amenities, they generalized them as "pleasant surroundings" without specifics.[32] In contrast, Dan River's advertisements were laden with specific urban amenities to entice those workers who saw themselves as good and reliable. In one advertisement laid out next to an in-depth report on the modern machinery and urban amenities of Schoolfield, the company printed that 1,500 workers were needed for life and work in the "charming" and "model village" that boasted churches,

[27] "Operatives Wanted," *Henderson Gold Leaf*, September 13, 1906, 3, Newspapers.com.

[28] "Wanted: 200 Families," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, November 26, 1906, 13, Newspapers.com.

[29] "More Operatives Wanted," *Alexandria Gazette*, June 5, 1901, 3, Newspapers.com.

[30] "Cotton Mill Operatives to Start New Machinery," *Atlanta Constitution*, December 17, 1910, 12, Newspapers.com.

[31] "Wanted: Operatives for New England Cotton Mills," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 10, 1900, 8, 8, Newspapers.com.

[32] "Operatives Wanted," *The Daily Free Press*, September 24, 1902, 4, Newspapers.com.

libraries, education from kindergarten to high school, and "modern cottages."[33] The details of Dan River's advertisements underscored management's desire for model workers who would fit in well in their model village. In addition to these newspaper advertisements, management also sent out employees to go on recruiting expeditions to small communities in the hinterlands of Virginia. Carol Handy and her sister Elaine Parker remembered such a story of their own grandfather, David William Handy, who was recruited to work at Schoolfield in the 1910s.[34] Like many millhands, the Handys left their farm in Patrick County and began the transition to industrial life in a "piecemeal fashion," keeping a farm in nearby Pittsylvania County and working in the mills off and on.[35]

During Schoolfield's development, management sought to recruit and retain white workers by demonstrating the company's power to create a model community that was sophisticated in urban design. By the 1910s, Dan River evolved its recruitment tactics by increasing its boosterism of Schoolfield's urban amenities through other publications of its own design. Dan River mills disseminated formal materials such as booklets and informational postcards to entice workers to Schoolfield. These promotions of the village, such as a 1917 fold-out postcard included a few photographs of the working conditions at the mills, but mostly focused on the village's urban amenities including education, healthcare, and housing blended with rural pleasures such as gardening and a reminder of the crop that sustained rurality and a racial hierarchy, cotton. In the 1917 promotional postcard, the colorful outer envelope emphasized the pastoral, enticing its readers to open the contents with familiar images.

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[33] Dan River Cotton Mills, "Employment For Workers: 1,500 Operatives Wanted for New and Model Cotton Factory at Danville, Virginia," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, August 17, 1913, 3.

[34] Carol Handy and Elaine H. Parker Interview.

[35] Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 39–40.

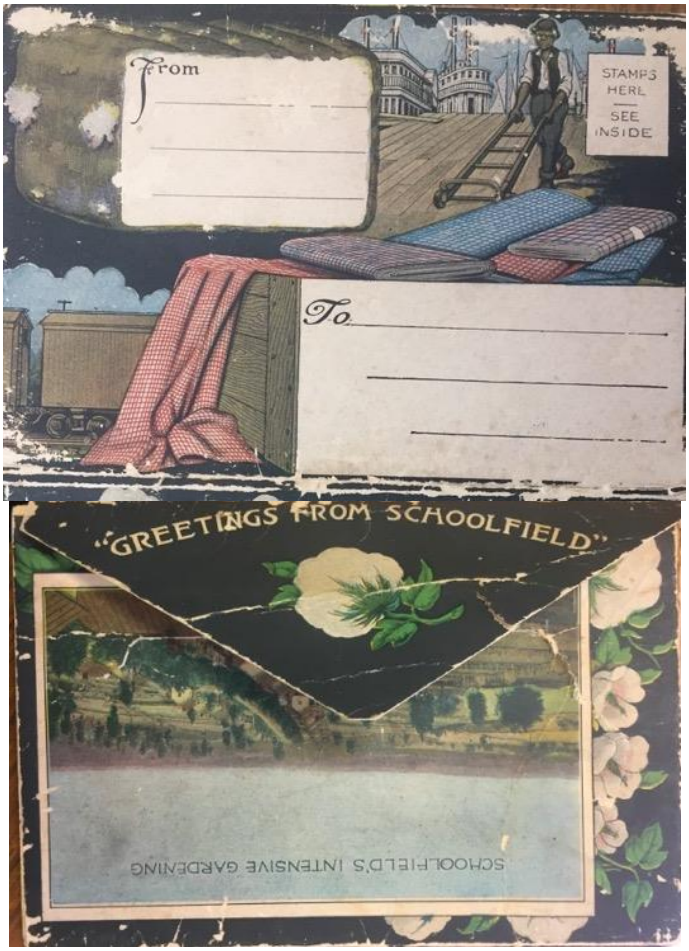

Figure 11. The outer envelope of the 1917 promotional postcard distributed by Dan River Mills. In author's possession.

The border of the outer envelope featured cotton bolls and flowers bursting open against a black background. The address side of the promotional postcard featured images of cotton in bales and finished fabric as well as a harbor where white-sailed boats and steamships awaited the transport of this cash crop, brought to and from the boat by a Black man rolling a handcart along the harbor. The other side of the outer envelope similarly bordered with cotton bolls and flowers centered a brightly colored vista of one of Schoolfield's residential streets, with the focus on the spacious backyards, with text in the image that read "Schoolfield's Intensive Gardening." Inside, black and white photographs revealed the urban amenities that a new industrial life could offer these rural recruits to Schoolfield. While the fold-out images within the promotional postcard packet featured

black and white scenes of the social life, community amenities, and work environment of Dan River, the vibrancy of rural scenes and Black labor in acceptable space were the critical initial enticement to open the card.

These postcards offered a way for potential millhands to claim ownership of their own future in this world of racial hierarchy and balanced modern urbanity. As literary scholar Susan Stewart discusses in her analysis of the souvenir, through postcards the "public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional" are reduced to "the miniature, that which can be…appropriated within he privatized view of the individual subject."[36] The sender of a postcard thus gifts the recipient with a memory that they, too, can hold in their own mind's eye, offering the recipient as much ownership of a particular space and time as the sender has in seeing it and being there. Historian Christopher Dingwall's thesis on selling slavery adds a racial critique of these types of postcards, arguing that images of the Black enslaved body on postcards allowed white senders and recipients to see themselves defined as white in the contrast to a Black image. The Schoolfield recruitment postcard's outer envelope presented potential workers with a similar "authentic racial aura" through a "displaced reference to an eradicated regime of human commodification," in Dingwall's words, in their representation of Blackness.[37] Through these postcards, which were likely mailed by current millhands to family members in the hinterlands, Dan River sold potential millhands on Schoolfield through pastoral imagery and a Black image engaged in physical labor subordinate to while millhands' operative roles as citizens, residents, and workers in the mill village.

[36] Susan Stewart, "Objects of Desire," in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Duke University Press, 1993), 137, https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822378563.

[37] Christopher James Dingwall, "The Sale of Slavery: Memory, Culture, and the Renewal of America, 1877-1920" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2015), 215, ProQuest (AAT 3740093).

Urbanity for Recruitment

New recruits in Schoolfield were placed in company houses, which totaled over 840 and were built in two phases in the village between 1903 and 1926. The company-owned homes were tidy, functional shelters for white workers to teach those who had acquired "but little of the art of living" in their previous "precarious existence on mountain farms," in the opinion of the village founder and namesake, Robert Addison Schoolfield and his protege Harry Fitzgerald.[38] The art of living required a modest, ordered existence for that could wean workers from their uncouthness as an "essentially...rural people."[39] Despite these workers' racial desirability, their rural ways still needed tending if they were to perform the idealized notions of white supremacy.

To guide the construction and layout of these homes that could at once welcome rural millhands and train them in urban ways, management relied on best practices in mill village residential design as set forth by a fellow southerner, Daniel Tompkins. Tompkins, a southern engineer and architect who had had northern training, prescribed that mill villages maintain just enough rustic charm to make their rural inhabitants feel at home in a new industrial urban environment. In his 1899 textbook on southern industrial design, Tompkins suggested that southern mills depart from the northern company town practice of row houses and build detached, single-family mill homes spaced at least seventy-five feet apart from the center of one house to the other. With space between and behind and backyards that provided enough room to garden, raise chickens, hang washing, and have a bit of privacy without isolation, houses laid out by Tompkins's rules attempted to accommodate rural workers, easing them into industrial work and urban life.

Analysis of the built environment of Schoolfield reveals strict adherence to some of Tompkins's textbook rules. With rare exception, all homes in Schoolfield were plotted seventy-five

[38] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 109.

[39] Tompkins, *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features*, 117.

feet apart from one another, though on smaller plots that were often a third of an acre rather than Tompkins's prescribed half-acre. Layout of backyards and frontage for these Schoolfield homes helped balance the urban and rural that Tompkins recommended. Houses were clustered near the street with abbreviated frontage anywhere from twenty to thirty feet. Small front yards were buffered from the street with intermediary porches on all the homes.[40] Close enough to allow conversations with one's neighbors or those walking by on the sidewalk, porches offered spaces of transition from the public to the private realm, encouraging socialization without exposing millhand families to a public world.[41] Behind the homes stretched large back lots bounded with the "best grade of wire fencing" to encourage gardening, but also gave an ordered, "uniform appearance" that was much to be desired," in the opinion of mill staff.[42] Along with gardens stood small wooden privies in the backyard, relieving the company of installing an expensive sewage system for indoor plumbing, which executives deemed unnecessary for their rural mill recruits.[43]

Under Dan River founder and board member T.B. Fitzgerald's architectural direction, Schoolfield's first 220 workers cottages were built along the first six residential streets in the northern section of the village. Oak Ridge, Bishop, Wood, Spencer, Water, and Park curved to the

[40] These principles are still key to neo-traditional planning schemes in present-day suburbs. Neo-traditionalism is practiced, as some planning scholars have argued, in an attempt to preserve traditional "English" culture much in the way Tompkins advised mill managers to create these homes to preserve aspects of a rural American tradition. Daniel Maudlin, "Constructing Identity and Tradition: Englishness, Politics and the Neo-Traditional House," *Journal of Architectural Education* 63, no. 1 (2009): 51–63.

[41] Joseph Rykwert argues that the historic use of the street was to offer a mediated passage between private and public via an intermediate area such as a porch, gate, or street flanked with columns, which offered physical markers between that which is public and that which is private. Joseph Rykwert, "The Street: The Use of History," in *On Streets* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), 15–27.

[42] Hattie Hylton, "Dan River Cotton Mills; Summary Report," 1916, 3–4, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[43] Also known as outhouses, closets, or privies, outdoor toilets were installed in Schoolfield in 1911, well after first residential construction began in the village in 1903. Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 256; E.L. Ferguson, "Statement of Amount of Contract for Painting Cottages," 1920, Box 27, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

West, North, and East of the central mill site, though on a lower topographical plane.[44] The monotonous style of these homes was mirrored in the bulk of residential inventory in the fifteen streets Dan River developed in the 1910s in a southern area of Schoolfield. Lined up along sloping northern and southern streets of the village, Schoolfield's homes followed a repetitive pattern of six, four, three, and two-room cottages. The most typical style was a four-room house, but no matter what size or typology, nearly all Schoolfield homes bore the familiar markers of southern cotton mill design. These homes had wood shiplap exterior siding, a side-gable standing-seam metal roof with one or two interior brick chimneys, double-hung wood-sash windows with six-over-six lights, and a partial-width front porch with simple wood post supports. The larger six-room homes had dormers extending from the front and rear roof planes on a rare half-story above the first, and some homes had decorative vents beneath their roof gables. For the most part, however, these homes had little ornamentation or variation. Even the wood was all of the same kind: North Carolina pine single sourced from the Snow Lumber Company in High Point, who furnished lumber for frames, weatherboarding, flooring, window sashes and doors of these early homes.[45]

The interiors of these homes were just as simple. Most of these one-story wood-frame homes drew from a traditional British folk form, the hall-and-parlor form, which developed into the larger massed-plan form popular in the southeastern United States among mill village housing.[46] Following this tradition, these homes were usually two rooms wide and one or two rooms deep. Whether situated in an L-shape as the three-room houses were, or a simple rectangle as four-room houses were shaped, most interior floor plans divided the rooms with a central hallway to increase

[44] H. R. Fitzgerald to Lockwood Greene & Co., September 11, 1903, Box 51, p 814-15, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[45] R. A. Schoolfield to Snow Lumber Company, October 13, 1903, Box 51, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[46] Virginia McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 144.

ventilation, which was believed to enhance workers' health and sanitation.[47] Houses had plaster walls, two central interior fireplaces, a pantry in one of the rear rooms, but of course no indoor plumbing and thus no bathroom.[48] In larger houses such as the six-room type which had one-and-a-half stories, fireplaces were placed in the two front rooms and the rear rooms were equipped with flues for wood stoves to heat the house and cook what little food they had—pinto beans from the garden, ham hock or biscuits were regular staples.[49]

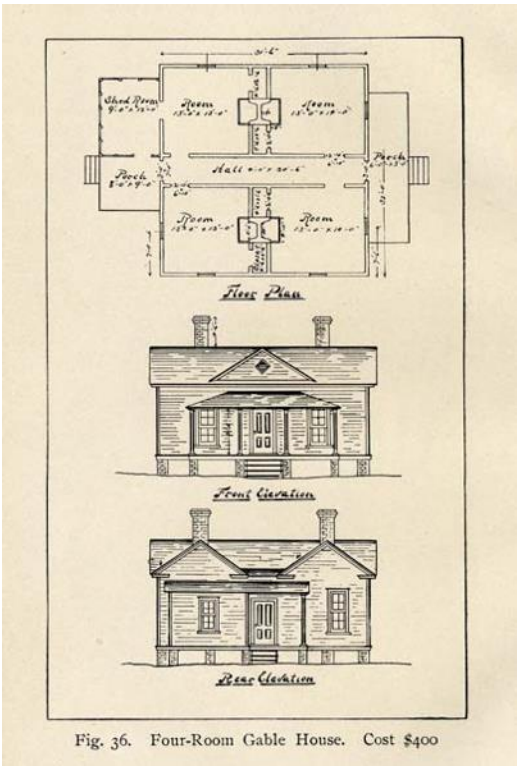

Fig. 36. Four-Room Gable House. Cost $400

Figure 12. Tompkins's designs for a four-room mill house. Tompkins, D.A. Cotton Mill, Commercial Features. A Text-Book for the Use of Textile Schools and Investors. Charlotte, NC: Published by the author, 1899., p 120.

[47] Though the original architectural plans for Schoolfield company housing are no longer extant in the Dan River Mills archive, copies made by Gray and Pope consultants can be found in "108-5065 Schoolfield Historic District - Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey File," 2000, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

[48] Thompson, *Echoes from the Mills*, 26.

[49] See Hall et al's discussion of millhand diets and the rampage of pellagra, a disease of those who are nutrient deficient, which plagued piedmont millhands. Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 150; Engelhardt's chapter on "Mill Work" illuminates the everyday diet of millhands and how this "absence of healthy eating" made up a southern food story that was one of "decidedly unromantic, painful loss." Elizabeth Sanders Delwiche Engelhardt, *A Mess of Greens: Southern Gender and Southern Food* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011; ProQuest Ebook Central), 129, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=3039058; For a fictional imagining of one such Dan River millhand meal, see William C Guerrant, *Jim Wrenn* (Rough Branch Publishing, 2017), 31.

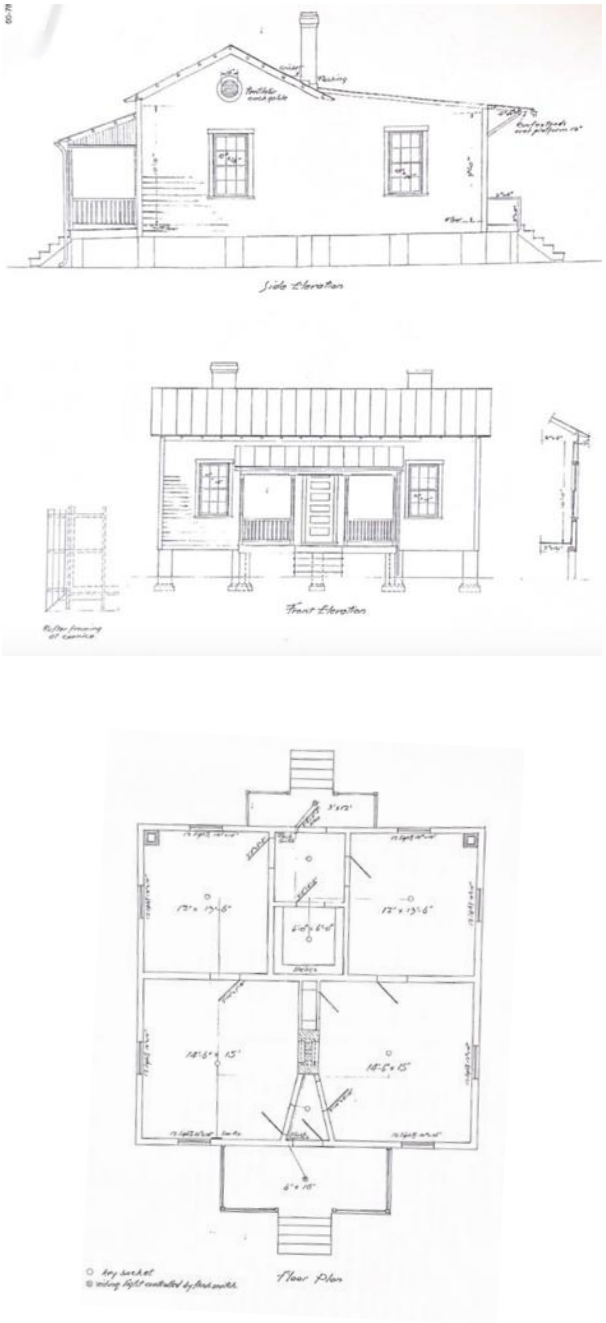

Figure 13. Dan River Mills designs for their four-room mill houses shared similarities in architecture such as a rectangular interior plan, clapboard exterior, piered foundations, partial-width porches, interior chimneys and a lack of ornamentation. Gray & Pape files in 108-5065 Schoolfield, Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

In housing design and layout, Dan River management attempted to order the natural environment as much as their rural workers using the best practices of southern mill village design. Yet the more pressing motivation was embedding a collective sense of urban identity among the

millhands who occupied these homes. Looking down one of these Schoolfield streets, especially in the southern residential section, was like looking down an endless mirror, with some streets stretching half a mile long of nearly identical houses. Surrounded by homes of similar material and form, Schoolfielders often recalled that in the village "you were just about all one."[50]

With little distinction of housing stock, a pervasive sense of equality easily spread through the village among millhand families housed on these southern streets of Schoolfield. This sense of equality offered another buffer to the distinct lower economic class Schoolfielders may have found beyond the village limits. Few neighborhoods in Danville shared the same level of uniformity in layout and architecture that Schoolfield did. Where other neighborhoods like the West End had homes that boast a diversity of architectural styles and massing, Schoolfield's community was built on the premise of similitude and order. Without the contrast in architectural style and layout, no one millhand could recognize himself as lesser than any other millhand. Buoyed by similarity in the built environment, Schoolfielders were protected from the knowledge that they were different than middle and upper-class white people whose may have lived among less collectively curated urbanity.

Dan River management relied heavily on modern investments in the village as enticing amenities for recruitment and guarding their investment in labor by attempting to garner company pride among stockholders and company investors. Crowing in his board reports, then-secretary and treasurer of Dan River Mills Harry Fitzgerald parroted the company's recruitment ads and official pamphlets. Fitzgerald affirmed Schoolfield as a village of modern construction evidenced in residents' enjoyment of company-provided conveniences such as leveled streets, electric lights, and filtered water.[51] Schoolfield's modern streets, lighting and clean water were sources of pride for the

[50] Wally A. Beale, interview by Jack Irby Hayes, 1984, Averett University Collections.

[51] H. R. Fitzgerald, "Mill Report," January 12, 1916, 2, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

board, Fitzgerald reflected in his report, showing that Dan River had made the right investments that could not only attract white labor, but keep them at the company.

Millhands may have been impressed, too, by the modern amenities of an urban life, such as leveled roads. The first residential streets of Schoolfield were leveled and covered in left over cinder from the village's coal yard by the 1910s.[52] One street—West Main Street, the main arterial road of the village—was even asphalt-paved, just like the prominent streets of downtown Danville, where trolleys and other new transportation technologies chugged back and forth.[53] The village's leveled streets were a step-up from the mudded rural backways mill recruits had known before. For instance, recruits from Caswell County, North Carolina just south of Danville, were accustomed to trudge and drive on unimproved or gravel streets which made up nearly half the miles of road in that county until the 1930s.[54] In contrast to these uneven, rural dirt roads, the leveled streets of Schoolfield announced the village as a new, modern urban settlement that left the rugged backways of rurality behind.

These new Schoolfield streets were even more of an urban scene as they were lined with electric streetlights, installed by the Boston-based engineering firm Lockwood Greene as early as 1903.[55] With both water-generated and coal generated electricity, Dan River Mills could supply its village with an abundance of power, held in the private hands of its corporation.[56] Although useful

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[52] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 256.

[53] Thompson, *Echoes from the Mills*, 30.

[54] The highway survey of North Carolina indicated that gravel roads made up 120 mils and unimproved roads 26 miles of the total 308.4 miles of road in Caswell County. *North Carolina County Road Survey of Caswell County*, Highway, 1:190080 (Caswell County, North Carolina: North Carolina State Highway Commission. United States. Bureau of Public Roads., 1930), Digital Collection: North Carolina Maps, North Carolina State Archives, https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ncmaps/id/2028/rec/6.

[55] Fitzgerald to Lockwood Greene & Co., September 11, 1903.

[56] Unlike Danvillians, who had to pay for their electricity largely through a municipally-owned power company since the 1880s, Schoolfielders did have the added work benefit of free electricity sourced separately from the city of Danville. L. Beatrice W. Hairston, *A Brief History of Danville, Virginia, 1728-1954* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1955), 79.

for surveillance of millhands at night and in the dark mornings and evenings of winter months, electric lights could also boost the modern image of Schoolfield. With electric lights along its streets, Schoolfield served as a model for a new southern industrialism and urbanity, seen in more spectacular displays in other cities of the New South such as Atlanta and Nashville around the same time period.[57] In the world expositions hosted in those cities at the turn of the century, enraptured visitors had seen magnificent displays of electricity, which demonstrated, in one exposition staff's opinion, "the progress of the age and the latest improvements in the comforts and necessities of life."[58] As these expositions and world fairs showed, electricity was the manifestation of modern technology's power to enhance human life.

Though a more modest manifestation, in 1903 Schoolfield's electricity would have similarly awed rural folk. These modern comforts were almost unheard of in America at the turn of the century and well into the twentieth century in the rural south. When millhand recruits first arrived in Schoolfield, many of them were seeing electricity for the first time. These former farmhands were like many Americans in that respect. In 1907, for example, only eight percent of residential dwellings had electricity, and households that did were usually wealthier urban citizens. Over time, the number of residences with electricity grew steadily from sixteen percent in 1912 to almost twenty-five percent in 1917.[59] In keeping with the expanding electric grid, in 1917, Dan River management had electric lights installed not only along the streets of Schoolfield, but in workers' cottages. Electric

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[57] For more on the role of electricity in defining popular concepts of modernity in the United States and the south, see, David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990); Casey P. Cater, *Regenerating Dixie: Electric Energy and the Modern South*, History of the Urban Environment (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).

[58] As quoted in Cater, *Regenerating Dixie*, 13.

[59] U.S. Census Bureau., "S.109 Percentage of Dwelling Units with Electric Service: All Dwellings," in *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, S 108-119. Growth of Residential Service, and Average Prices for Electric Energy: 1902-1970, 1975, 827, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/1975/compendia/hist_stats_colonial-1970/hist_stats_colonial-1970p2-chS.pdf.

lights in the interiors of homes were still an urban amenity almost unheard of in private homes the rural south. Dan River's provision of electricity for work and community heralded a new, modern southern village that offered its white residents the some of the luxuries of urban life.[60]

Urban Showpiece

These luxuries extended beyond the homelife of millhands with the more public demonstrations of Dan River's welfare capitalism, evidenced in prominent community buildings in the village. In addition to "clean cottages," electric lights, Schoolfield also boasted a number of churches, public schools, YMCA, welfare building, and women's dormitory that created a "model setting for a big happy family of 5,000 souls," according to one gushing reporter.[61] The majority of these nodes of urbanity were clustered along West Main Street. This main arterial road of Schoolfield became was the village showcase, where management brought journalists and visitors to see the magnificent urban setting the company had created in line with the magnificent quality of their cloth product. Along and near West Main Street were a large baseball field, YMCA, outdoor Bandstand, Welfare Building, schools, company store, fire and police station. Observers who frequented Schoolfield, for example, called it a model of an all-white industrial community of "modern construction."[62] With the landmarks and services of urban life on prominent display along the central corridor of West Main Street, millhands could be comforted daily of their privileged status as urbanites, and visitors and executives could be impressed with this dual investment in community and textiles.

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[60] Other southern mills similarly offered electricity in their mills and villages, beginning in 1893 with the Columbia Mills Company in Columbia, South Carolina. See the discussion of mill village electricity in Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 47–49.

[61] "Vast Scheme of Welfare Work Carried on by Riverside and Dan River Mills.," September 22, 1918, [clipping], Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[62] Fitzgerald, "Mill Report," 2.

The most ostentatious buildings in the village were among the first to be built. Under new leadership in 1903 of Robert Addison Schoolfield, Dan River Mills broke ground on the first industrial building projects in Schoolfield. In these early years, management worked with the Boston-based architectural firm Lockwood Greene to design and engineer the first company mills and powerhouses in Schoolfield. Lockwood Greene was a leading engineering and architectural firm that had worked in the design of the mill village of Pelzer, South Carolina, for example, as well as hundreds of other textile mills in the north and the south.[63] Lockwood Greene worked with Dan River Mills at both their Riverside Division and the Schoolfield mills throughout the company's existence, offering distinction and modern, professional methods to Dan River's industrial design. In 1903, the firm designed a powerhouse and a twenty-five-foot dam that sprawled across the Dan River about a quarter of a mile north of a fifty-acre mill complex at the top of the Schoolfield hill.

During the construction of the dam, Dan River hired regional construction companies to realize Lockwood Greene's designs for the first mills on the site. While the Schoolfield name dominates the history of the company, the history of the mill village's built environment centered on the Fitzgerald family, who helped construct much of the early mills and homes in Schoolfield. Mill founder Thomas Benton Fitzgerald owned a brick company that supplied the bricks for the first mills, and a few of the Schoolfield brothers' own homes in Danville. T.B. Fitzgerald's relations, W.G.B. Fitzgerald, and J.H. Fitzgerald led construction efforts under their firms of some of the early work of mill housing in the village.[64] While other local construction companies were hired for various projects in the village, in this first building phase, the Fitzgerald name was imprinted in the landscape, the homes, and quite literally in the bricks, of the first mills in the village.

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[63] See Lockwood Greene Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History for a full list and documentation of companies with whom this firm worked.

[64] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 107.

Because of the advent of electricity, the mill complex could be built away from this dam on a sprawling plot north of West Main Street. Central to the layout of the village, the mill complex was filled with large two and three-story brick mill buildings named for the order in which they were built. The brick, two-story Mill Number One and Mill Number Two were completed in a conjoined L-shape in 1903 and began operating with electric power on Thanksgiving Day in 1904.[65] By the 1920s, the mill complex had two brick weave sheds beneath a shared sawtooth roof, and two more brick-clad, saw-tooth roofed mills, Mill Number Three and Mill Number Four built with the help of T.C. Thompson, a Birmingham, Alabama construction firm.[66] Around 1923, J. P. Pettyjohn, a construction company out of Lynchburg, Virginia completed a five-story brick and concrete bleachery and a finishing plant on the northwest corner of the mill complex.[67] Large brick smokestacks shadowed the complex of industrial production, where cotton was stored, sorted, dyed and woven into plain sheeting and pillowcases for the home and bright ginghams for apparel.

At the center of the mill complex was a large tri-tone whistle, which bellowed at 5:30 a.m., 6 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. reminding workers to get to the mills for their shift that started at 6:30 a.m. sharp.[68] Also central to the site were the rail tracks, which carried in coal and other materials for daily operations. These tracks snaked through the site from Southern Railway that ran parallel to West Main Street into the belly of the mills near the smokestacks. Underground tunnels and bridges crisscrossed from one building to the next, creating weatherproofed paths to navigate workers and fabric. Newly hired workers might have gotten lost on the sprawling site, but they could never lose sight of the industrial power of the mill, underscored by its size and complexity.

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[65] King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*, 158; Thompson, *Echoes from the Mills*, 2.

[66] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 115–16.

[67] Smith, 179.

[68] Ethel Posey Knick, interview by David E. Hoffman, 1984, Averett University Collections.

Figure 14. Lockwood Greene designed the Schoolfield dam along the Dan River, shown under construction here circa 1902. The dam supplied power to an electric station, which fed into the mills, visible in the background to the left. Image courtesy of the National Museum of American History Archives Center, Lockwood Greene, Collection # 1113.

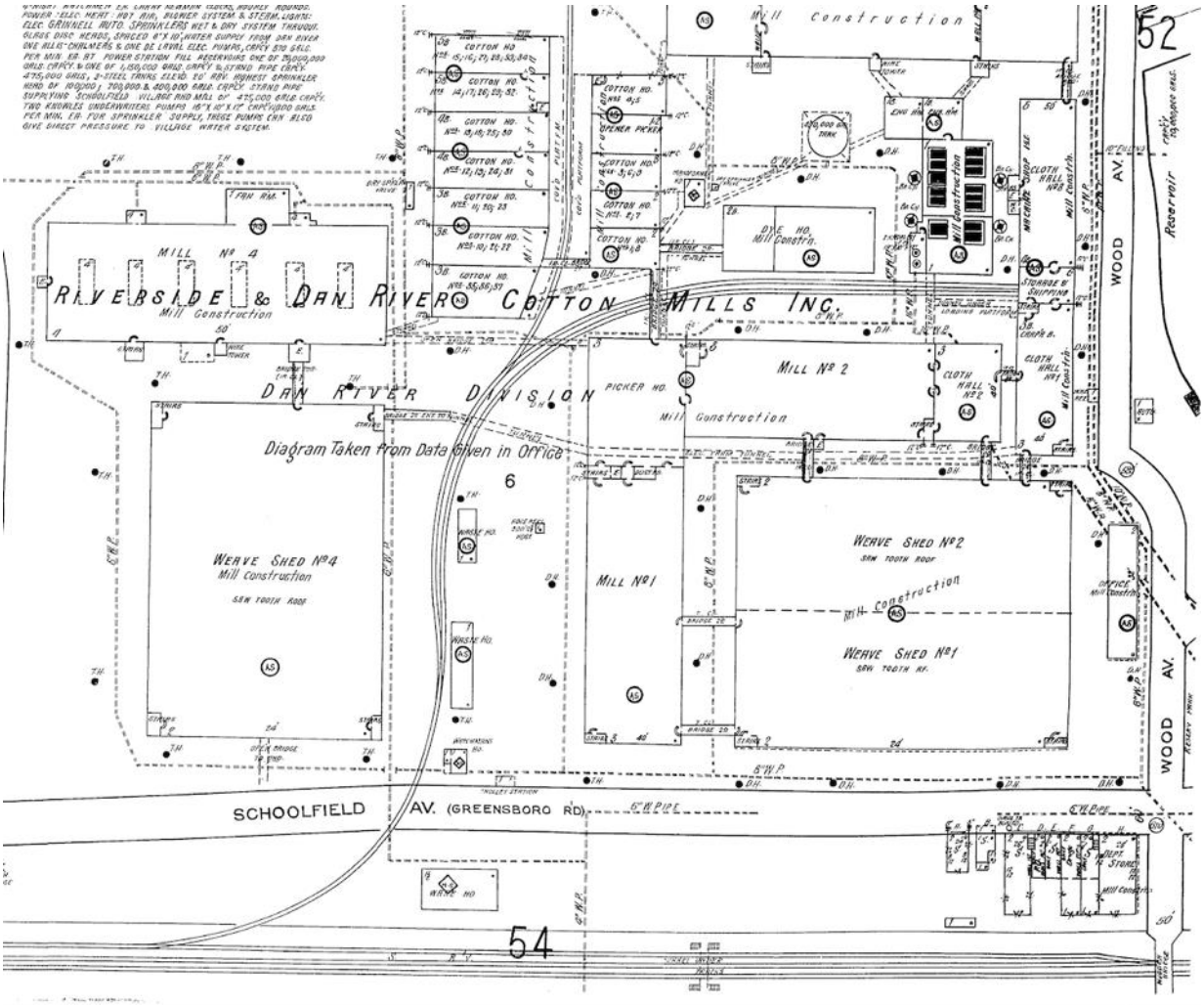

Figure 15. A 1920 Sanborn map featuring Number One and Two weave sheds just to the west of the office building (seen in the lower right), the L form of mills Number One and Two around the weave sheds, and the dye house, cloth halls and warehouses on the northern end of the complex. The rail tracks can also be seen running from the southwest into the interior of the complex. Lockwood Greene's industrial design gave Dan River a level of sophistication on par with other textile mills across the country. Sanborn Map Co. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Danville." 100ft to 1in. Sanborn Map Co., 1920, p 55.

Figure 16. A 1911 photo by Lewis Hine, showcasing a main workers entrance to the Schoolfield mill site between the windowed and brick-clad Mill Number One and the weave sheds. Bridges, seen here, often helped workers navigate between buildings. Hine, Lewis Wickes, Schoolfield Cotton Mills, Danville Va. "Going to work; 6:30 A.M. June 9," 1911.

Figure 17. Casual visitors to the mill village would be made most aware of the mighty mills, pictured here guarded by the executive office building near the reservoir. The mill site dominated the view along West Main Street. Postcard circa 1906, in author's possession.

Guarding these large mills stood the Company Office, a two-story executive building. Built in 1903 with a seamless 1921 addition on its northern elevation, this Italian Renaissance Revival style brick office building showcased the sophisticated design of its architects at Lockwood Greene and the regularity, order, and prestige of the management who officed there.[69] The office building's front eastern elevation faced away from the mill site and overlooked a small reservoir and the bend of West Main Street. The exterior walls of the rectangular building were a Flemish-bond variant of dark brick with decorative detailing around each window and the two main entrances on the eastern elevation. Approached by stone steps, the two main entrances had arched openings with fanlights surrounded by a course of brick with keystone and decorative sawtooth detailing. The rectangular building featured a terra cotta hipped roof and decorative vents ribboned the upper attic level of the building just beneath the roof eaves. Each floor featured large windows with awnings to shield the morning sun for management staff, who arrived at their desk at 8:30 a.m. Monday through Saturday, almost two hours later than millhands were expected to be at their looms.[70] Ordering millhands' lives was easily realized from the seat of the office building. Strategically located at the southeastern corner of the mill site, the offices were close enough to the mills to feel the ground shake with the production of the weave shed next door, but also close enough to West Main Street so executives could keep an eye on the comings and goings of millhands, the majority of whom lived in the residential section just to the south. In the intimacy of this pedestrian environment everything was close, and everything was seen.

To impress visitors and soften the industrial core of the village, the mill complex and Company Office Building were fronted by a tree-lined park and reservoir that ran along the northern

[69] This executive building and the mills themselves were similar to the "proud ambition" evident in other mill villages like Glencoe, North Carolina, which Brent Glass analyzes. Glass, "Carolina Dwelling."

[70] C.D. Gaver to H. R. Fitzgerald, January 13, 1927, Box 14, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

side of West Main Street. Fast-growing and cheap, silver maple trees and Texas umbrella trees were the favored accoutrement of the village and along this park, offering quick shade to the new development and an idyllic feeling even amidst the urban and industrial setting.[71] Designed by Charlotte-based landscape architect Earle Draper, this entryway softened the industrial expanse of the mill complex, integrating the mills with the village.[72] On the approach to the mills site, the naturalistic, urban, and industrial wove together a "rich expression" of one of the "most perfect schemes for community upbuilding ever conceived" in industrial America, according to one enthusiastic visitor.[73]

Figure 18. An undated postcard showing the grounds of the tree-lined road off of Park Avenue that led to the executive office building. The saw-tooth roof of the mills can be seen in the background of this naturalistic entry, designed by the Charlotte-based landscape architect Earle Draper. Postcard in author's possession.

[71] R. A. Schoolfield to J.Van Lindley Nursery Co., October 1, 1903, Box 51, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[72] H.R. Fitzgerald to E.S. Draper, October 23, 1920, Box 27, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[73] "Vast Scheme of Welfare Work Carried on by Riverside and Dan River Mills."

To protect its expansive real estate, Dan River management pulled together a crew of company-employed firemen early as 1910.[74] Around 1919, management expanded the fire department with the Schoolfield Fire Station that stood guard on the southwestern edge of the village.[75] Eventually housing the village police headquarters, this Colonial Revival fire station established order and protection. The one-and-a-half-story stucco fire station featured two engine bays centered on its front elevation facing West Main Street. Flanking these bays on either side were Craftsman style entrances featuring fanlights and long two-over-two double-hung windows with transoms. Clad in terra cotta tile, the fire station's roof boasted hipped dormers on the front and the rear roof planes and an exterior end corbeled brick chimney on one side. Impressive in design, this fire station could serve both the practical function of protecting village property as well as serving as a reminder of the care and protection millhands who lived in the village could expect from management.

Figure 19. Firemen stand guard with an engine outside the Schoolfield Fire Station. Circa 1920 image courtesy of the Danville Register & Bee.

[74] The Sanborn fire insurance map for that year notes that the company had organized a fire department with twelve employees who lived in the village. Sanborn Map Co., *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Danville*, 100ft to 1in (Sanborn Map Co., 1910), 40.

[75] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 122.

One of the central landmarks of Schoolfield's urban, commercial life was the Park Place Mercantile Company, initially a company-owned store. Park Place Mercantile stood on the south side of West Main Street at the corner of Baltimore Avenue, which led into a southern residential area. The two-story brick building was one of the first to be constructed in the village, along with the mills and executive office building across the street between 1903 and 1906. Park Place Mercantile Company offered wood, coal, food and other general necessities so that mill villagers would not need to venture far beyond the confines of the village in order to take care of daily needs and wants. Dan River Mills owned most of the shares of Park Place Mercantile until 1909, when the propriety of profiting from the same millhands they paid was put into question. Nevertheless, shares were not sold off to some distant private party, but to others with stock in Dan River Mills, John Swanson and an executive staffer with Dan River Mills, D. A. Overbey.[76] The mills also continued to play landlord to the store, overseeing improvements and making suggestions for various accoutrement, such as simple awnings on the front windows.[77]

The Park Place Mercantile building itself was a simple form, demonstrating its function as a necessary economic convenience for both the millworkers and the owners who stood to profit from their daily needs. The building had a common-bond brick exterior with a Flemish-variant and consisted of six different stores of various massing on the first floor. The second floor was interconnected with two main stepped entrances from West Main Street. Each first-floor store had its own recessed entrance flanked by storefront glass to show off their wares. Wood transom windows ribboned the front elevation, and the second-floor windows offered a touch of distinction to the building with limestone sills that framed the double-hung, wood-sash windows with twelve

[76] Smith, 110–11.

[77] H. R. Fitzgerald to John P. Swanson, October 3, 1919, Box 27, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; H. R. Fitzgerald to John P. Swanson, December 22, 1920, Box 27, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

over twelve paned lights. A simple flat roof capped the building with brick chimneys on the rear elevation. By 1910, the building boasted a barbershop, drugstore, furniture store and billiard room, with the second floor dedicated to fraternal societies and other social clubs.[78]

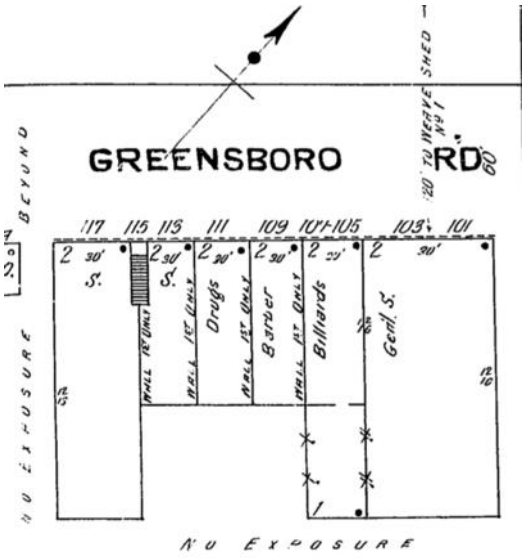

Figure 20. The commercial row in the village as shown above on a 1910 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Sanborn Map Co. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Danville." 100ft to 1in. Sanborn Map Co., 1910, p 40. Park Place Mercantile Company (below left) stood opposite to the mill site. Image from Hayes, Jack Irby, Jeanne Faulconer, and David E. Hoffman. "Schoolfield: A 48 Year History," 1984. Averett University Collections. Park Place Mercantile was not strictly a company store, though it had its own scrip (below right) offered to millhands who used specially-designed coins for credit at the store, which would later be taken out of their paychecks. Scrip in author's possession.

Along West Main Street stood the prominent social buildings that signaled management's generosity, continuing the chain of industrial showpieces along Schoolfield's central street. These social buildings, the Schoolfield YMCA, Bandstand, and Welfare Building, were designed in the

[78] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 110.

1910s by professional architects and shared similarities in style, design, and end use. No mere wood-frame modest cottages, the grand storied brick buildings along West Main Street encouraged millhands' socialization and stood as representatives of Dan River executives' progressive plans for ordering millhands' lives.

Down the street from the commercial hub of Park Place Mercantile stood a sprawling brick YMCA. Designed by J. Bryant Heard, the building was celebrated by Dan River management as "the most beautiful and best equipped industrial Young Men's Christian Association of the South" when it was finished in 1916.[79] Capped with a terra-cotta hipped roof and grounded with a large pool in the basement, the YMCA was built in the Classical Revival Style, evoking the stability and morality of Christian training that went on within. Three main entrances on its street-facing elevation towards West Main Street allowed for the frequent co-mingling of all the mill's men, the "[s]uperintendents, overseers, second hands, electricians and office men, weavers, loom fixers, doctors, spinners, carders, and grocers" in a "common brotherhood."[80] Walking through the YMCA's doors would, management hoped, "awaken manhood in its finer and broader aspects" for white male millhands in the village who took part in the educational, spiritual, and athletic programs offered within the YMCA.[81] In Schoolfield, these doors were open to white men only. As a segregated space, the YMCA became management's hub for teaching lessons about white manhood, including loyalty to racial harmony and a commitment to productive work, to their millhands.

[79] H. R. Fitzgerald, "The Commission upon the Responsibility of the Young Men's Christian Association to Men and Boys in Industry and Transportation," March 21, 1921, 2, Box 3, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[80] Fitzgerald, 2.

[81] Fitzgerald, 2.

Figure 21. The Schoolfield YMCA and Recreation Center, as featured in a 1917 Schoolfield promotional pamphlet, in author's possession.

Another main attraction for Schoolfielders and the broader public along West Main Street was the bandstand, an outdoor pavilion that regularly hosted musical concerts just west of the YMCA. This bandstand was designed by Earle Draper, the Charlotte-based landscape architect who had softened the northern side of West Main Street with his extensive tree-lined park. With Draper's designs, this stylish, welcoming outdoor band stand was influenced by the proliferation of gazebo-type bandstands found throughout parks and other white public spaces in the United States and England in the early twentieth century.[82] This influence resulted in the Schoolfield bandstand's Classical-Revival style semi-circular wood pavilion, with an acoustical shell enclosing a stage. The shell featured a dentiled and modillioned roof cornice above a curved arched opening that faced West Main Street, with a stage buttressed with boxwood. Far from the hillbilly string music that "spoke to the changing realities of working-class life" in workers' new urban-industrial world, the bandstand held classical concerts of the village band, led by a cosmopolitan band leader, an Italian

[82] Paul A Rabbitts, *Bandstands: Pavilions for Music, Leisure, and Entertainment* (Liverpool: Historic England in association with Liverpool University Press, 2018).

named Joseph Vezzetti.[83] Throughout the spring and summer's weekly concerts, this bandstand would show off the sophistication of Vezzetti's orchestra to anyone passing by or in attendance.[84] Although the bandstand's location close to the noisy streetcars hurdling down West Main Street may have dampened the fineness of its acoustics, the band itself was locally acclaimed as "one of the finest bands in the south."[85] The bandstand's design and end use offered respectability and dignity to the village's musical recreation.

Figure 22. An undated photo of the Schoolfield Bandstand, which stood between the YMCA and the Welfare Building. Courtesy of the Schoolfield Museum Collection at the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History.

Just west of the YMCA and bandstand stood the Welfare Building on the same southern side of West Main Street. Shaded by fast-growing young silver maple trees, the two-story brick Welfare Building bustled throughout the 1910s and 1920s with nurses, social club coordinators, daycare providers, and other female staff in charge of welfare activities for the village. Before the Welfare Building was complete, most of this same health and childcare was provided mainly at the

[83] Huber, *Linthead Stomp*, 41; Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 252.

[84] Jack Irby Hayes, Jeanne Faulconer, and David E. Hoffman, "Schoolfield: A 48 Year History," 1984, 5, Averett University Collections.

[85] "Bringing Back the Band Concert," *The Bee*, March 31, 1927, 6, Newspapers.com.

Day Nursery, a wood-clad building that stood south of West Main Street in a residential section of the village. Designed by the same architect as the YMCA, the new and distinguished Welfare Building announced Dan River's deepened investment in childcare and healthcare as their population of workers grew.

Finished by 1917, the Welfare Building was built in a combination of Prairie-Style and Missionary Revival Style and formed a distinctive L-shape with a terra-cotta hipped roof. The front elevation faced north on West Main Street with exterior stretcher-bond brick walls above a raised concrete foundation. Broad transomed arched windows on the first floor welcomed the passerby and evenly spaced windows opened generously onto the second floor. The front northern elevation featured two main entrances for the public, with separate entrances on the western and southern sides for staff.[86] The broad, conservative lines and solid material of the Welfare Building's exterior showcased the company's almost missionary purpose to provide for the health and care of Dan River's workers and their children, the future millhands of the village.[87]

[86] J. Bryant Heard, "Welfare Building Blueprints and Architectural Renderings," 1916, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[87] J. Daniel Pezzoni, "108-5065-0083 Schoolfield Welfare Building" (Department of Historic Resources, Richmond Virginia, September 28, 2010), https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/VLR_to_transfer/PDFNoms/108-5065-0083_Schoolfield_Welfare_Bdg_2010_Nomination_FINAL.pdf.

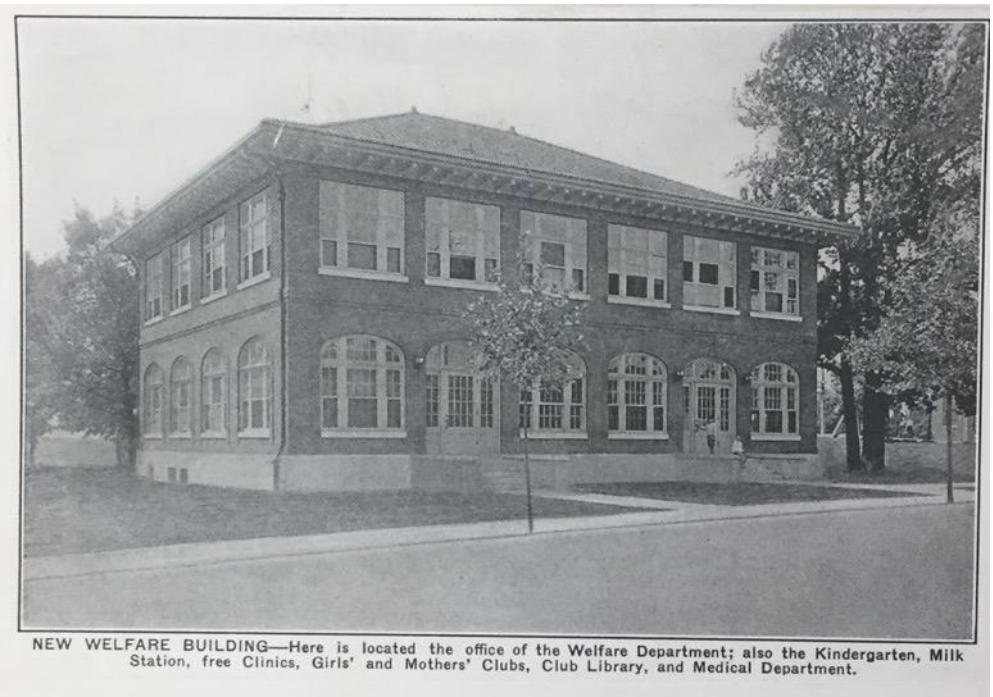

Figure 23. The Welfare Building as featured in a Schoolfield promotional pamphlet, ca. 1917 in the author's possession.

Urban Shield

The architectural form of the Welfare Building as well as the YMCA was similar to the architectural form of mill executives' houses that had been built in the residential West End area just a few years prior. The similarity of style was no accident. These social buildings along West Main Street also served as a shield for millhands, whose private lives in modest cottages still had a foot in rurality. To convince millhands of their privileged status despite their considerably more modest existence, Dan River management ensured that communal places at least mirrored the style of Dan River executives' own private homes.

Dan River founders John Schoolfield and his brother Ad Schoolfield both had built Missionary Revival structures for themselves in a fashionable area of Danville in 1913. Complete with stucco exteriors, terra-cotta roofs and Prairie-style expansive floor plans, these executives' homes a mile north of Schoolfield were intimately connected with Schoolfield's welfare buildings in design and purpose. Though not identical in material to executives' homes, the Welfare Building's

impressive windows and classical lines evoked feelings of home and familiarity as well as solidity and constancy that the two private executive homes did. The balance of windows and a long and low form encouraged in both the Welfare Building and the YMCA stood for the stability of Dan River as a company, the steadfastness of its executives, and the promise of economic progression for those millhands who entered their doors. By creating similar community structures to their own homes, mill management grounded workers in spatial grandeur and the dependability of brick and stone.

While executives could experience this grandeur in their private lives, millhands' could only experience it only communally. Their inclusion in white privilege and middle and upper-class experiences relied on their participation as loyal workers at Dan River. If they shirked from mill work, millhands could lose access to these communal white privileges. Through architectural style, Dan River executives attempted to encourage millhands' identification with, and loyalty to, the corporation by relegating them to stylish social spaces where millhands could practice and participate in the accoutrement of middle and upper-class white society.

Figure 24. John Schoolfield's home at 354 West Main Street, built in 1913 (far left, courtesy of Google Maps); the Schoolfield YMCA and Recreation Center (center left, courtesy of VDHR) the Welfare Building, built in 1917 (center right, courtesy of VDHR) and Robert Addison Schoolfield's home at 1124 Main Street, built in 1911 (far right, courtesy of the Danville Historical Society).

Further engendering community and corporate loyalty, Dan River invested in what management considered to be healthy leisure activities for millhands. Flanking the village's eastern boundary was a modest wood-frame baseball park provided by Dan River Mills. The Danville

Fairgrounds, as it was known, offered a space for lively baseball games, which regularly occurred on Saturday afternoons from May to September. Dan River's makeshift park was shared with the City of Danville's baseball club and Schoolfield, bringing an economically diverse crowd of Danville and village men to the stands on any given Saturday. Situated near the entrance to Schoolfield village, the ballpark showcased to the broader Danville community Dan River's commitment for wholesome recreation, leisure, and amusement for workers. This ball field also acted as a buffer for the industrial workings of Schoolfield, showing Danvillians a side of millhands' leisure amidst urban life.

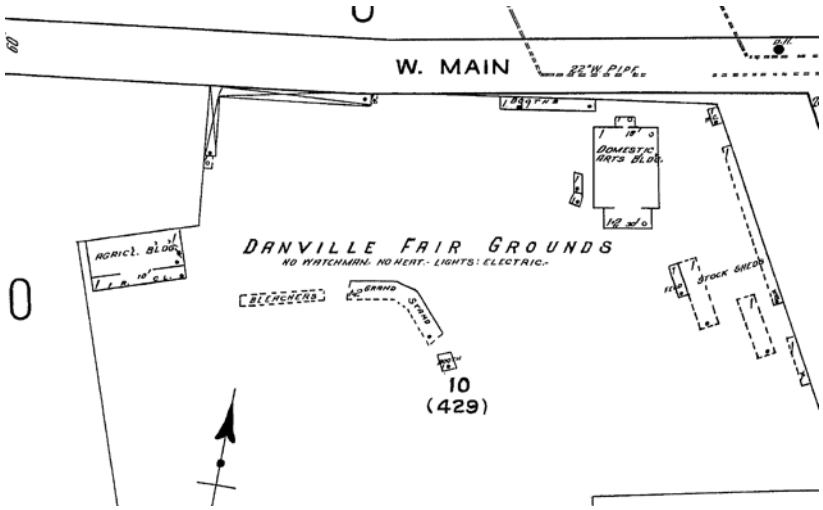

Figure 25. 1920 Sanborn map, showing the Danville Fair Grounds and site of the grandstand and bleachers that created the first modest ballpark shared by Schoolfield and Danville. Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1920, p 34.

Another strategy the company management employed to shield its industrial and money-making purpose was by building grand homes along Schoolfield's eastern boundary, which faced Danville. Early on in Schoolfield's development, management sought to protect middle-class Danvillians from too much mingling with millhands. Many middle-class Danvillians lived along West Main Street and frequented Ballou Park, the large municipal park adjacent to the village's eastern boundary. To showcase the orderliness of the village to these middle-class Danvillians and shield them from the unrefined similitude of the rural recruits within, management placed the most prominent homes Schoolfield were those along Park Avenue at the eastern boundary of the village.

Park Avenue was a key village entrance that met with West Main Street at a perpendicular and ran all the way South to the Dan River. The most visible to outsiders, the homes that stood on the corner of Park and West Main were among the grandest in the village. Reserved for supervisors, overseers and clerical staff at the mills, these homes' construction was left to the capable hands of mill-founder T.B. Fitzgerald's construction company.[88] Once completed by 1910, the tidy rows of large, seven-room, wood-frame houses faced outwards, away from the core of the village and were distinctive from all other village housing in form, massing, and style.

These seven-room homes were nearly a story taller than the majority of housing stock in the village, with more complexity and grander details from the roof to the foundation. Seven-room Park Avenue homes were built in the Queen Anne style, with simple wood shiplap exterior walls, but with complex massing that signified the complexity and distinction of character residing within. Both the front and side caught the eye with the variation of bays, the hipped roofline was interrupted with lower cross gables only outdone by corbeled brick chimneys that rose from the front roofline and from the rear extension, heralding the home's capacity for warmth and security. The front entrance was the grandest detail and featured a full-width porch with a shed roof and central pediment, upheld by wood Tuscan columns.[89] Through their design and prominent setting, Park Avenue houses guarded middle-class sensibilities, giving visitors and management a distinguished entrance on their approach into the village. Park Avenue was flanked with these grand homes as well as community buildings, strategically placed to perpetuate the philanthropic and distinguished image of the textile mill as a benefactor and industrial leader for white people in the

[88] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 256.

[89] I am indebted to Hill Studio staff Katie Gutshall and Kate Kronau for their guidance with this architectural description of a typical seven-room house on Park Avenue.

south. These homes offered an aesthetic buffer from the objectionable and perhaps embarrassingly modest homes that peppered the mostly unseen areas of the village to the south and west.

Figure 26. An example of the larger seven-room houses on Park Avenue at the corner of West Main Street and Park Avenue (upper) in contrast to (lower) a circa 1917 photo of typical operatives housing throughout the village. Circa 1915 photo of seven-room houses courtesy of Judy Edmonds. Operate Cottages photo from "Welcome to Schoolfield" promotional postcard circa 1917, in author's possession.

These visible homes were built at the highest topographical points of Park Avenue, demonstrating that they were not "the usual row upon row of houses built upon piles and open to the searching breach of winter winds" found in other company towns. Housing the most important clerical staff and department heads, these larger houses created the image of being in "a suburb where small business and professional men [had] founded an exclusive development" with houses

built "in all manner of modern designs."[90] The most prominent homes in Schoolfield were built to create the image of exclusivity, order, and prominence unlike anything that had been previously seen in other working-class neighborhoods in Danville and the broader south.

In working-class neighborhoods within Danville, the city neighbor to Schoolfield, houses were similarly uniform, but did not boast the larger variety of Schoolfield. In the Tobacco Warehouse District, for instance, Black tobacco workers lived in similarly undeviating wood-clad, modest housing as the white millhands in Schoolfield.[91] Yet, that particular neighborhood had no larger homes like those on Park Avenue that could present aspiration to economic success through productivity. Black workers in Danville were relegated to their place, one that was reinforced through the built environment that offered no promise for economic or social mobility. Similarly, these workers were entirely excluded from the village altogether, making Schoolfield a white enclave unlike other southern mill villages. In Gastonia, North Carolina, for instance, Black workers lived in the textile mill village of Loray, though in a separate section.[92] In contrast to other mill villages and working-class neighborhoods in Danville, the Park Avenue homes in Schoolfield showcased the urban privileges of white workers and the promises for their potential economic mobility.

The Park Avenue boundary also shielded any incoming Danvillians from seeing a symbol of millhands' lower economic status: the privy. For all the company's espousing of sanitation in the mill village, management did not include indoor plumbing for toilets in any of the mill houses, a

[90] Dan Meeker, "Ten Per Cent Wage Cut May Not Mean Smaller Pay Checks at Danville," *Greensboro Daily News*, February 2, 1930, 7, NewsBank.

[91] Gary Grant et al., "108-0058 Danville Tobacco Warehouse and Residential District" (Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 1978), Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

[92] Mattson, Alexander & Associates, Inc., "Loray Mill Historic District: National Register of Historic Places Nomination and Inventory," August 2000, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. This segregation was similar in mining and steel towns in the deeper south, as Robin Kelley explores. Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression,* Twenty-fifth anniversary edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

common amenity in white urban households by this time.[93] Millhands had access to water through an outdoor spigot, and access to baths and indoor bathrooms available at the Welfare Building for small fee.[94] The company also provided toilet facilities in their mills, weave sheds, and dye houses, but all of the modest Schoolfield cottages had similarly modest wood-frame privies in their backyards. As one Schoolfielder, Nell Collins Thompson, remembered in her memoir of the village's early years, "slop jars were often made use of, especially at night" in addition to the privies.[95]

Millhands' private residences had a dry privy, most likely of the "box and can privy" type. Box and can privies were outhouses common to communities with 300 or more houses and were usually handled by a municipality or a large private company for upkeep and sanitation.[96] Box and can privies featured a water-tight receptable placed in the ground beneath the seat. These receptacles would store waste for a short period of time but required costly regular removal and disposal in order to maintain sanitary conditions.[97] Additionally, these types of privies left waste vulnerable to extreme temperatures. Waste would often freeze in their receptacles during the winter months,

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[93] It was only in the 1950s, after Schoolfield's annexation, that indoor toilets were installed by private owners who had gained control over the company's residential real estate.

[94] Thompson, *Echoes from the Mills*, 42; Heard, "Welfare Building Blueprints and Architectural Renderings."

[95] Thompson, *Echoes from the Mills*, 26.

[96] *The Sanitary Privy*, Public Health Reports, Supplement 108 (Public Health Service, 1933; HathiTrust, 2018), 38, http://hdl.handle.net.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/2027/osu.32436001154598; Charles P. Neill, "Chapter VIII. The Mill Community," in *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 534–35, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435026689562.

[97] Unsanitary privies were the culprit for spreading hookworm, a parasitic disease that, like pellagra, increasingly was tied to southern mill communities. The subject of public health reform in the early twentieth century by public health officials and private philanthropy, hookworm was seen as a disease that impeded productivity in white workers, a dire affect in the productivity-obsessed Progressive era. For more on this disease, see Edward H Beardsley, *A History of Neglect: Health Care for Blacks and Mill Workers in the Twentieth-Century South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990); Todd L. Savitt, ed., *Disease and Distinctiveness in the American South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); Safron Helena, "Memorializing the Backhouse: Sanitizing and Satirizing Outhouses in the American South," (master's thesis, UNC-Chapel Hill, 2019), Carolina Digital Repository, https://doi.org/10.17615/BQMS-SV22; Cheryl Elman, Robert A. McGuire, and Barbara Wittman, "Extending Public Health: The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission and Hookworm in the American South," *American Journal of Public Health* 104, no. 1 (January 2014): 47–58, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301472.

making collection and removal a difficult process. In the summers, waste was heated with the rise in temperature, causing "objectionable odors" to permeate throughout residential areas.[98]

Figure 28. A close-up of Jackson and Lee avenues in Schoolfield showing how southerly streets fizzed out (such as Jackson Avenue, seen in the lower left) and the interconnectedness of residential streets via alleyways and cut-throughs, highlighted in green between the house's backyards. Privies, which stood in the fifty-paces from each house in the backyards, were accessed via these alleyways. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Danville. 100ft to 1in. Sanborn Map Co., 1920. Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867–1970.

Though these privies could be unpleasant, they were not uncommon in southern mill villages or the south as a region. In southern mill villages, seventy percent did not offer indoor or flushing waste facilities.[99] In the south, as one 1909 report on southern sanitary conditions found, only a third of farming households and handful of rural white households had a privy at all; most rural families simply relieved themselves in the back of the barn or some nearby woods.[100] Privies at private residences in Schoolfield and especially the indoor facilities on the job thus were often a step up to

[98] *The Sanitary Privy*, 37–38.

[99] Elman, McGuire, and Wittman, "Extending Public Health," 49.

[100] Elman, McGuire, and Wittman, 48; Helena, "Memorializing the Backhouse," 39.

the first generation of Schoolfield millhands, who likely grew up with unsanitary privies or no privies at all on rural farms.

Where and how white millhands relieved themselves became an object of ridicule both to insiders and outsiders of the Schoolfield community. In one instance, a middle-class, white Danville reporter, Julian Meade, centered his snickering of millhands' backwardness on one particular white millhand named Capitola. Capitola, Meade observed, was a "sallow-faced girl" whose backwardness was evident in her "hat[ing] all Negroes," and fear of "trains, telephones" and other "manifestations of American progress," including the flushing toilets at the mill. Meade recalled that Capitola's friends teased her for being "still impressed by the ladies' rest room" at the mill where she worked pressing pillowcases. Having come to Schoolfield from 'a "remote mountain section," Capitola's amazement at the mill's indoor plumbing was prime fodder for ridicule by urbanites within and without the Schoolfield community. Meade gleefully related how these fellow millhands mocked Capitola, saying "we ought to put some pine brush by the door [of the restroom] so Capitola can tell where she's at."[101]

[101] Julian R. Meade, *I Live in Virginia* (New York & Toronto: Longmans, Green & Co., 1935; Internet Archive, 2006), 253, https://archive.org/details/iliveinvirginia008017mbp.

Figure 27. A typical residential street scene in Schoolfield circa 1915. Homes had expansive gardens, fencing and some greenery. Outhouses can be seen peppering the landscape at the very rear of every spacious backyard. Undated photo in the Clara Fountain Collection, Danville Historical Society.

Even though privies lacked the modern cleanliness of indoor toilets, they still played a role in elevating white millworkers above Black workers, who were often employed to run the village sanitation services. In another recollection of waste management in Schoolfield, villager Nell Thompson recalled how "a stoic, black and mysterious driver" she called Hambone would remove waste from the privy tanks and haul it off in the "honey wagon," a sanitation cart ironically named for its distinctly unsweet smell.[102] This wagon rolled through Schoolfield's residential streets to clean out the privies that stood to the rear of houses and to deliver weekly toilet paper to white residents. "Anyone who lived [in Schoolfield]," Thompson continued, would forever remember this figure of Hambone, who, Thompson related to her white readership "sat majestically about the 'honey wagon' with his nose stuck high in the air, for more reasons than one."[103]

[102] Thompson, *Echoes from the Mills*, 26.

[103] Thompson, 26.

Though an object of casual ridicule to white residents, Black sanitation workers served these white millhands vision of themselves in two important ways. Not only did these workers regularly clean out privies, accessing them from rear alleyways off the main residential streets, but Black sanitation workers' presence driving the honey wagon signaled to many Schoolfielders their privileged white status, giving them a much-needed social buffer. Even though Schoolfielders had no better waste facilities than many Black Danvillians living in Almagro, who similarly had privies, the Schoolfield sanitation workers like Hambone maintained the ruse of these millhands' social capital as white people in the south.[104] As Liston Pope's classic work on mill village life made clear, this ruse of white privilege was important to maintain as Black men and women were the "poor white man's last outpost against oblivion" and middle-class scorn.[105]

Conclusion

The modern, urban white enclave of Schoolfield was not an incidental development, but the result of two decades' worth of intentional planning, design, and construction guided by Dan River executives' ideals. Through the design of the mill village, managers were not just amicably welcoming workers into a new community. They also sought to leverage these urban amenities as a recruitment strategy, promising their once-agricultural workers a progressive urban world as a mirror to their own progress up the social and economic ladder. The layout of the village, as well as the boastful employment advertisements and press pieces about Schoolfield, demonstrated the company's investment and offered workers the promise of social progress along with economic opportunity. By wielding impressive company housing, electric lights, stores, community recreation and social buildings, Dan River enticed workers to the village. These urban amenities, placed along

[104] Residents of the nearby Black village of Almagro, for instance, had outhouses until the 1960s, according to one local resident. Ruby Douglas personal communication with author, 2020.

[105] Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia*, 12.

prominent avenues of Schoolfield, could also be showpieces of Dan River management's corporate generosity. Urbanity itself could be a cover for the fact that, despite the promises of progress, millhands were still a rural folk who lacked many of the expected graces of white Anglo-Saxons. The tension of urbanity was always taut with this dual purpose: at once to entice and showcase as well as hide and obscure.

With the public spotlight on these visible urban amenities in Schoolfield, Dan River management could hide some of their less modern practices, which will be explored in the following chapter. The spaces where seemingly backwards or otherwise morally reprehensible practices were performed, such as employing children and single women to work long hours at the mill with little compensation, were hidden from public view on the sloping southern streets of Schoolfield. Obstructed from view because of topography, these spaces harbored the bulk of modest village housing, schools, churches, and women's boarding houses. These hidden spaces had just as important a role as those more prominent spaces of Schoolfield. Obscured from sight from West Main Street, the southern streets of Schoolfield allowed management to save on costs through modest worker provisions, embodied in pervasive privies, and to guard the everyday lives of millhands who were being trained for industrial work and urban life.

Despite the positive economic and social mobility Schoolfield offered to millhands, the implications of the village layout suggest that this urban world was somewhat of a guise. Should middle-class Danvillians have peeked beyond the boasting main avenues of Schoolfield such as Park Avenue or West Main Street, the reality of millhands' continued lower-class existence would have blemished Dan River management's pretension of urbanity. What remained hidden in Schoolfield was thus just as important as what was seen.

CHAPTER 3: TRANSFORMING THE FOLK: WELFARE AND WOMEN'S WORK, 1908-1921

Introduction

Modern amenities of the built environment of the mill village promised to erase a denigrated social type—the poor white farmer—by transforming him into an Anglo-Saxon who knew the art of ordered, urban living. This transformation was a central concern of executives in the early years of Schoolfield between 1908 and 1921, when Dan River Mills established, through programs and community buildings, an extensive welfare scheme for employees that worked in tandem with urban amenities to transform the white worker. This welfare program and its dedicated buildings addressed community health, sanitation, as well as "getting our people contented and to be better workers," in the words of one Dan River welfare staff member.[1] According to one mill executive, welfare made their workers "more efficient and better-paid…more interested and intelligent citizen[s]…more responsible parent[s]…more alert, alive individual[s]."[2] Dan River Mills executive Harry Fitzgerald similarly considered the work essential in Schoolfield during his tenure at the company. Fitzgerald went so far as to speak of the "spirit" of such work that "transformed" his workers into "nobler and better souls."[3]

[1] Marion S. Hanckrel to H. R. Fitzgerald, June 6, 1913, Box 30, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[2] Herring, Harriet L Herring, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages*, 297.

[3] Robert King, "A Cultural Innovation That Failed: The Rise and Fall of 'Industrial Democracy' at the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills, Danville, Virginia 1919-1930" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1978), ProQuest (AAT 7824736), 56.

This tandem goal of worker welfare and productivity was pursued through an old southern method of paternalism—of silent expectations of fealty woven into welfare and work—blended with an emergent professional class of white southern women who would dedicate their feminine energies to this work.[4] By employing a female workforce to carry out the company's welfare program at Dan River, management wielded a process of worker transformation into a white citizenry through an evolution of paternalism this chapter discusses as industrial maternalism.

Industrial maternalism was an offshoot of paternalism, with women at the helm offering services for the physical and emotional well-being of millhands. Within feminine spaces and maternal programs, women welfare workers at Dan River shepherded millhands away from being agriculture folk into white industrial citizens. While industrial paternalism, or welfare capitalism, has been studied as a national phenomenon, the case study of Dan River offers more tangible examples of paternalism's mechanisms, and the way a distinctly feminine service through industrial maternalism was rendered to fulfill a racial ideal.[5] Welfare workers were not just female, they acted as stand-in mothers to Schoolfielders, often transferring their own maternal or matrimonial feminine obligations to the community as a whole. At Dan River, most welfare staff were white, single, and childless women who spent their feminine energies on developing workers and workers' families into ideal white citizens in Schoolfield. Their energies encapsulate the process of industrial maternalism, which was in conversation with broader national cultural changes such as the emergent

[4] Historians Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie offer a general definition of paternalism. They argue that paternalism developed in the south in the post-bellum years as an intricate system of reciprocal duties and obligations that bound agricultural workers to their employers. Though the use of paternalism in agriculture and industry waned under nationalizing forces in the 1910s, it was the New Deal that effectively severed employers' central relationship to workers' welfare—ultimately diminishing a key feature in the system of obligation and duties of paternalism. Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie, *Southern Paternalism and the American Welfare State: Economics, Politics, and Institutions in the South, 1865-1965*, Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[5] Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997). Philip Scranton, "Varieties of Paternalism: Industrial Structures and the Social Relations of Production in American Textiles," American Quarterly 36, no. 2 (1984): 235–57, https://doi.org/10.2307/2712726.

"New Woman" of the Progressive Era who entered a world of suffrage, higher education, and professionalization. Feminine realms, such as the home, were legitimized in professional settings where domestic science, the concern for the health and well-being of men and women in the home, were increasingly seen as being at the core of a productive society and a strong workforce. Industrial maternalism centers this era of southern women's entry into professional realm and examines women's critical role in the evolution of paternalism in early twentieth century.

This evolution of paternalism into industrial maternalism at Dan River not only reflected women's changing roles in society, but also exposed the contested process and conflicting definitions of whiteness. As male mill managers delegated the social transformation of their millhands to female welfare staff, these two authorities worked toward different visions of a white ideal. These differences are revealed through the spaces and programs of Dan River's extensive welfare program in Schoolfield developed between 1908 and 1921. During this time, the welfare program was placed under the leadership of Hattie Hylton, whose tenure as Superintendent of Welfare at the company shapes the periodization of this chapter. Hylton's leadership showcases the influences of national cultural movements of the Progressive era and how these feminine efforts could at times dovetail, and at time conflict, with an unsettled notion of whiteness.

As members of an exclusively white profession, textile workers were required to live up to shifting expectations of an Anglo-Saxon ideal. These evolving expectations were inextricably tied with the dynamism of southern industrialization and its economic growth around World War I. As historian George Lipsitz has noted, racial categories and racism has always existed in the United States, but these change over time "taking on different forms and serving different social purposes for each period."[6] During slavery, as historians David Roediger and Elizabeth Esch have shown, to

[6] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, Rev. and expanded ed (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 4.

be white was to "manage" enslaved laborers "intimately and expansively" in the south.[7] After the war and with the onset of southern industrialization, the locus of whiteness shifted to managing whiteness itself. The textile industry played a pivotal role in this shift in the racial category of whiteness though the welfare programs supported by mill owners like those at Dan River Mills. Since most of these millhands had never worked in an industrial setting, they had to be managed, provided for, trained, and surveilled within an economic and social scheme of southern industrialization. Gavin Wright highlights this process in his economic and cultural study of that economic change. Wright argues that industrialization was primarily a "matter of learning…on the part of the labor force."[8] The welfare buildings in Schoolfield were the hubs for learning, for socialization, and gaining an economic advantage over Black workers, who at that time in Danville were mostly agricultural workers or in the tobacco industry, an industry that offered little in the way of social or economic uplift.[9] Racialized socialization toward productivity and organization through textiles not only gave white workers an advantage over their Black counterparts, it created the conditions for a reality of economic and social supremacy by naturalizing the economic and social capabilities of a new white community of workers. Even as whiteness itself proved an unruly category, women's foray into a "species of missionary effort," of welfare programming at Dan River helped transform the first generations of Schoolfield's mill folk into individuals worthy of a "purer Anglo-Saxon" heritage mantle.[10]

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[7] David R Roediger and Elizabeth D Esch, *Production of Difference: Race and the Management of Labor in U.S. History*, Reprint edition (April 10, 2014) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 25.

[8] Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 124.

[9] See Nan Enstad's book for a further discussion of tobacco's reliance on Black labor. Enstad, *Cigarettes, Inc.*

[10] Herring, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages*, 301; T.E. Brown state director of vocational education in North Carolina as quoted in Brown, "Industry Is Giving Us a New South: A Story of Great Changes."

The Hidden World of Welfare Work

The southern process of women's professionalization evolved from early philanthropic and voluntary societies of white elite women, who similarly wielded the built environment—in the form of Confederate monuments and memorials—to cultivate white political and social power in the south. As many historians have shown, elite white women were key leaders in commemorating and preserving a white southern past through volunteer and philanthropic work.[11] As southern middle-class white women forged a new legitimacy as professional leaders in white uplift through welfare, they were the next generation's "women architects of white historical memory" in the south.[12] Through company welfare programs, professional white women did not wield the material of marble and stone to engrave the tenets of whiteness. Rather, these welfare staff helped engineer and maintain racial hierarchies of power and privilege through the built environment of mill village welfare. Under these middle-class white women's control, the unceremonious brick and mortared spaces of health, education, and childcare offered spaces for poor whites to be socialized into an urban industrial life and expectations of whiteness.

This redemptive welfare work was conducted mainly in the hidden, residential and southern section of Schoolfield. Though largely out of sight from the vantage point of West Main Street, this southern section boasted nearly 600 of the total 840 homes along fifteen streets south of West Main Street and the Southern Railway. At the northern end of these streets three churches, a school and women's boarding house guarded the swath of small homes from the commercial and industrial core of West Main Street. The placement of these southern, out-of-sight buildings reveals what, and who,

[11] Karen L Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 3; Brundage, *The Southern Past*.

[12] Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 15.

management needed to keep out of the public eye to maintain the image of a respectable model community.

Hidden from the sight of the mill, this sloping, mostly residential enclave of southern Schoolfield featured long straight streets on a grid pattern. A few streets ran west to east, but the majority of these southern residential streets ran north to south, fizzling out southwardly further from the mill. Without seeing the families who fueled the mill's profits, a casual visitor strolling along West Main Street, out of sight of these homes, might have assumed the entire textile production operated not through human labor, but through the magic of modern capital to set machines in motion. But the mills did rely on human labor, and executives seemed to be unwilling to showcase the underbelly of that reliance in this large southern residential section. In this southern section, these women did the hidden work of industrial maternalism, of transforming millhands into a better class of Anglo-Saxons through health, education, and social programs.

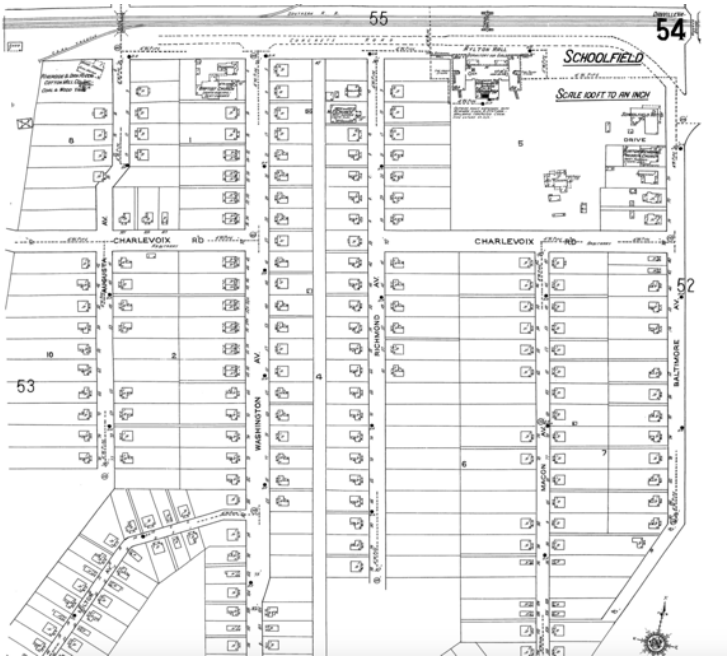

Figure 29. Most of the houses in Schoolfield, were located south of the Southern Railway along declining slopes that were hidden from view along West Main Street. The mill site is not pictured here but was just north of this residential area in easy walking distance from these homes. Sanborn Map Co. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Danville." 100ft to 1in. Sanborn Map Co., 1920, 54.

Before 1908, the welfare of Dan River workers in Schoolfield and at the Riverside Division in Danville had generally been run by "good ladies," female volunteers who were seen as being able to be in "closer touch and sympathy" with Dan River workers.[13] It was only around World War I that textile mill companies began hiring paid welfare workers, who oversaw public health, domestic science, and social club activities. In her 1929 study of welfare programs in southern mill villages, sociologist Harriet Herring found that only sixteen mills in the three hundred twenty-two she studied had professional welfare staff before 1914.[14] At Dan River this preference for women to organize the social and home life of workers was professionalized as early as 1908. That year the company hired a superintendent to run their growing welfare program: Hattie Hylton.

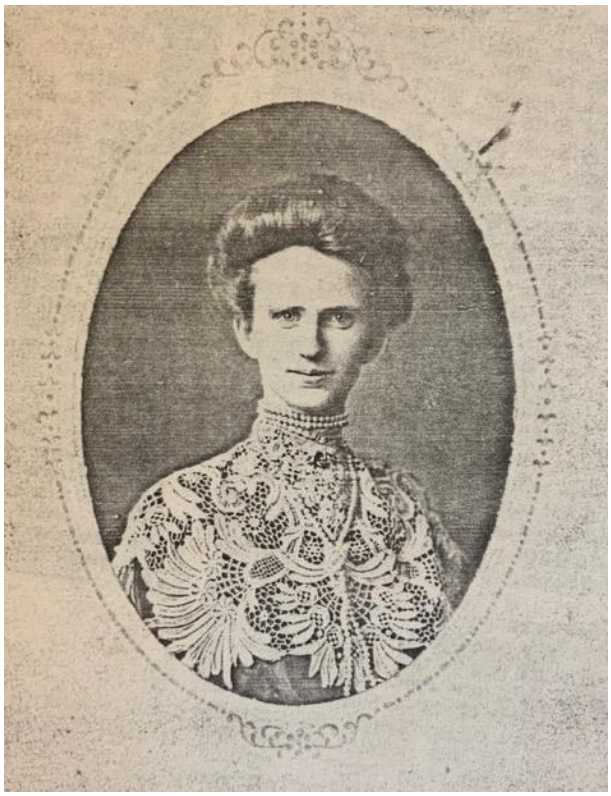

Figure 30. Undated photograph of Hattie Hylton from the early twentieth century. Box 35 in Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[13] Schoolfield Report Board minutes, 1907 as quoted in Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 109.

[14] Herring, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages*, 29.

At Dan River, as other mills in the south, welfare work appealed "chiefly to serious, earnest women" according to sociologist Herring.[15] Herring's observation was apt for Dan River Welfare superintendent Hattie Hylton. A "young energetic woman of faith," Hylton was thirty-five years old at the time she became superintendent of welfare.[16] Though without a husband or children, Hylton exerted her feminine attention on Dan River Mills where she ran their welfare programs, directed chiefly at children and working mothers, from 1908 until 1921.

Hylton originally hailed from the tucked away Appalachian town of Floyd, Virginia, where Dan River had actively recruited millhands to come to Schoolfield with promises of "larger living."[17] Hylton had risen from similitude with these Appalachian folk recruits, though she set her sights on teaching and had received training at Oxford Academy in Floyd, which by 1902 offered credentials "equal or above the New York Schools."[18] An educated woman, Hylton had ventured out on her own, roving from Kentucky to North Carolina to make her way as a professional teacher and caretaker for small children. Before Dan River hired her, she had been directing the first kindergarten in Danville and had shown herself to be capable of the welfare work that the company needed.[19]

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[15] Herring, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages*, 301.

[16] David Clark, ed., "Health and Happiness Number," Southern Textile Bulletin XXIV, no. 17 (June 21, 1923), Internet Archive, 2013, 8, https://archive.org/details/southerntextileb1923unse.

[17] Carol Handy and Elaine H. Parker Interview; Clark, "Health and Happiness Number," June 21, 1923, 8.

[18] C.H. Dunlop of New York City to Rev. Harris, February 8, 1902 as quoted in "Oxford Academy History Is Topic at Floyd Courthouse Chapter NSDAR Meeting," SWVa Today, https://www.swvatoday.com/floyd/news/article_d211087a-718d-11e4-b3cf-834230051cb8.html; "Hattie Hylton Biographical Reflection," April 11, 1930, 3–4, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[19] "Miss Hattie's Lasting Impact on Life," *The Bee*, April 28, 1958; "Hattie Hylton Biographical Reflection," 3–4.

Hattie Hylton's position as a professional, paid staff was only possible through the Progressive era's emergent liminal trope: the American "New Woman."[20] Most famously depicted by artist Charles Dana Gibson's "Gibson Girl" in popular culture of the independent and willful New Woman emerged in the 1890s through the latter years of the 1910s.[21] The pinnacle New Woman was commonly described by journalists and cultural observers as any "[s]ingle, white, affluent, politically and socially progressive, highly educated, and athletic" woman who insisted on a place among men in the professional and political world.[22] While most strongly associated with upper-class white women, the New Woman of the Progressive era was adopted by middle-class women in the south with a distinctly regional flavor that blended race with their rising position in the public realm.

As historian Martha Patterson has noted, the New Woman was an American character defined amidst a period of "rising nativist sentiment, intense racial conflict, and imperialist conquest."[23] The cultural trope buoyed the era's obsession with progressive reform and ethnic assimilation, especially in the south where cultural representations of the white New Woman had "a distinct spiritual investment in the heroics of the Lost Cause."[24] Middle-class women's work in the domestic realm gained legitimacy in tandem with the rising social legitimacy of white supremacy manifested through white uplift programs like those at Dan River Mills. Hylton, by transferring her

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[20] Martha H Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 27.

[21] The Gibson Girl image was inspired chiefly by Charles Dana Gibson's wife, Irene Langhorne and her sisters, one of whom was the Viscountess Nancy Langhorne Astor, the first woman in British Parliament. These Langhorne sisters were born and raised in Danville, Virginia in the 1870s. Coincidentally, so was Hattie Hylton who, though not upper-class, participated in some qualities of the Gibson Girl, namely singledom, childlessness, and professional work in a male-dominated environment.

[22] Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915*, 27; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, 1. paperback ed, A Galaxy Book 820 (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 245; Jane Hunter, *How Young Ladies Became Girls: The Victorian Origins of American Girlhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[23] Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915*, 14.

[24] See "Mary Johnston, Ellen Glasgow, and the Evolutionary Logic of Progressive Reform" in Patterson, 121–51.

own maternal duties to a broader community of Schoolfield, gave her energies to ensuring Schoolfielders fit in with a white ideal.

Making Place for a White Ideal

The foundation of that nebulous white ideal began with the care of mill children. Led by Hylton, the mill's first welfare work in Schoolfield addressed childcare and healthcare. Among the largest investments Dan River made were in the hubs of this work in the Day Nursery and the Welfare Building, situated at the gateway to Schoolfield's southern residential area and across the street from executives' offices. Yet, this work was not a philanthropic endeavor for the mere benefit of millhands. The company's welfare program was attached to a social contract, particularly for women. Welfare work oriented around women's dual roles in the village as mothers and workers. Women and their young children in textiles were notoriously underpaid in the family labor system, which paid the highest wages to primary male workers and lower wages to "complementary casual workers."[25] Childcare was critical in a work environment where white mothers, who were "compelled to work" at the mills because of their economic need, required childcare to similarly meet the mill's economic interest.[26]

Dan River supported these female millhands in the early years at the Day Nursery, a spacious wood-frame house that sat below the railroad tracks near the Baltimore Avenue school. The building, which no longer exists, stood on a large, wooded lot, with a park where children could play, and was surrounded in a largely residential setting. This Day Nursery was the hub for Schoolfield's first foray into welfare for working mill mothers. New mothers in the village were also trained by professional nurses, who would help deliver babies and stay with mill mothers in their

[25] Cathy L. McHugh, *Mill Family: The Labor System in the Southern Cotton Textile Industry, 1880-1915* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 16.

[26] H.R. Fitzgerald to J.A. Ordway, April 22, 1920, Box 27, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC; Hylton, "Dan River Cotton Mills; Summary Report," 4.

homes for over a week after a baby's birth, overseeing every aspect of the newborn's first weeks and training new mothers in proper childrearing. These nurses assisted new mothers and put the infants on a strict schedule of feeding, bathing, and sleeping. Once babies were on a set schedule, they could be dropped off at the Day Nursery, which accepted children from just four weeks to fourteen years old. For ten cents a day, working mothers placed their children under the "kind, systematic, and intelligent care" of childcare professionals throughout their shifts from 6:30 in the morning when their shift began to 5:30 in the evening when they finished.[27] Children were offered wholesome meals and the infants were given milk supplied by local cows.[28] By offering childcare for newborns and children, Hylton's welfare program helped bring young women back to the mills more quickly, without the loss of their social duty as mothers, or their cost effectiveness as lower-paid millhands at Dan River.

For the mill's management, the economic benefit of employing young women beat out socially accepted norms of white femininity and masculinity, which would have kept women in the home. In the late 1910s, the number of working mothers at Dan River made up twenty-nine percent of the female workforce, a sizeable percentage of female workers who were otherwise either younger, single women supporting parents or siblings or older women supporting husbands. This growing number of working mothers increased the need for more extensive childcare and healthcare.[29] In 1917, the welfare program expanded with the construction of the real "dynamo" for the "whole scheme of community betterment" work at Schoolfield: the Welfare Building.[30]

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[27] "Miss Hattie Hylton, Welfare Superintendent: Paternalism in the Cotton Mills," n.d., 5–6, Hylton Hall, Danville City 108-5065-0082, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.; Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 251.

[28] Smith, 251.

[29] Fitzgerald to Ordway, April 22, 1920.

[30] "Vast Scheme of Welfare Work Carried on by Riverside and Dan River Mills."

The Welfare Building stood at the corner of West Main Street and Baltimore Avenue. Oriented towards West Main Street, but in close proximity to the southern residential section of the village, the building could function both as a showpiece of community pride and as a central guard for the order and socialization of the millhands tucked away in homes south of the Welfare Building. As the center for health, education, and socializing near village residences, the Welfare Building became a "sort of haven for many people" in Schoolfield.[31]

The interior of the Welfare Building's main first floor was made for socializing the folk, young and old, in large and small groups. The first floor featured seven small rooms along the north and west perimeter of the building. A medical clinic with a dedicated physician, dental and operating room, nurses' offices, a milk station, toilets and bathing rooms were situated in the southern end of the building's L-shape. This cluster of southern rooms led into a large central room accessed by two main entrances that could accommodate the village kindergarten in the early part of the day and social gatherings in the evenings. The rooms along the northern perimeter facing West Main Street offered soft light throughout the day and were built originally for a dining room, kitchen, cloak rooms, and library. The second floor was primarily used as a club room, with a similar layout to the perimeter rooms on the first floor[32] Hattie Hylton's office was on the western side of the building's first floor. Facing west gave this room every bit of sun in the afternoon and evenings. In this office, Hylton no doubt spent long evenings assessing the day's activities and preparing for the next.

Hylton admired the programs she oversaw at the Welfare Building, which she believed were edifying for millhands' children who frequented the Welfare Building when they reached kindergarten. One of these children, Icy Norman, remembered the building and the staff distinctly, even in her later years. In a 1979 interview. Norman recollected how her mother, who worked at the

[31] "Miss Hattie Hylton, Welfare Superintendent: Paternalism in the Cotton Mills," 5.

[32] Heard, "Welfare Building Blueprints and Architectural Renderings."

mill, would drop her off every workday at the Welfare Building. When Norman arrived, the "trained nurses, real nurses" there—all women—changed her clothes into a uniform similar to the other children. Those women "had a category for each [child]" and ensured control over the daily diet and activities of these soon-to-be millhands.[33] Uniformed and scheduled, the assimilation of millhand children into a collective white corporate community was conducted at the Welfare Building through a professional staff of women.

Hylton leveraged these welfare programs not only as a benefit to millhands, but to surveil them. In a talk at a southern conference on industrial welfare, Hylton bragged that the medical care offered at the Welfare Building offered preventative care and was useful as a tool for worker surveillance. Hylton explained how a program of visiting nurses proved to be a "very wise move" as these women offered services in millhands' homes, winning the "gratitude, affection, and confidence" of patients. In such an intimate relationship with millhands, staff could more effectively keep a "careful check" on workers for mill superintendents, with whom nurses were "in constant touch." Knowing their patients, nurses could easily "detect the difference between a sick man" and one who "inclines to be shiftless and intemperate." Hylton argued that in the supervision of millhands alone the mills' expense of the entire medical program was justified.[34] With the Welfare Building as the hub, Hylton infiltrated workers' homelife to carry out the missionary work of transformative uplift for Dan River's white workers who might otherwise be shiftless and unproductive.

[33] Icy Norman, Interview H-36. (#4007), interview by Mary Murphy, April 6, 1979, Southern Oral History Program Collection, SHC., https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/norman/norman.html.

[34] Hylton, "A Fifteen Minutes' Talk on The Schoolfield Welfare Work: Its Aims, Methods, and Results," 4.

Conflicting Visions of a White Southern Cotton Mill World

Despite creating these sites of Anglo-Saxon training, Hylton and mill president Harry Fitzgerald often disagreed on the details of a white ideal. At times Hylton worried that childcare services, such as those offered at the Day Nursery, fell at odds with accepted concepts of white femininity. For Hylton, the Day Nursery was a necessary evil, one that undermined men's rightful role as providers and unfortunately allowed working women to fill the void. In one public talk, Hylton lamented that the childcare services had to be offered at all. They were only offered, Hylton argued because of the unfortunate fact that there were always "those mothers always found in a mill village," forced to support their families with textile work because of "desertion, shiftlessness, or general disability" on the part of loafing and idle mill husbands.[35] Hylton saw that providing extensive childcare support for working mothers encouraged their husbands' idleness and bemoaned the mill's childcare service for such encouragement away from a white masculine ideal.

In at least one instance, Hylton's doubts about the Day Nursery's services were at odds with mill president Fitzgerald's confidence in the system. Where Hylton begrudged the service, Fitzgerald encouraged its expansion to allow more working mothers, paid less than their male counterparts, to contribute to the company as productive millhands. When the Day Nursery's enrollment dropped to only forty children in 1914, Fitzgerald pressured Hylton to funnel more infants and toddlers through its doors. Hylton refused. Hylton declared that she could not "conscientiously" use her influence as Welfare Superintendent to expand the program that supported working mothers. A working mother was, in Hylton's opinion, "the worst thing that could happen to the father of the children," since it allowed a husband and father to loaf as his wife took care of the family's economic stability. Hylton appealed to Fitzgerald's paternalism and notions of white masculinity in an attempt to win over

[35] Hylton, "A Fifteen Minutes' Talk on The Schoolfield Welfare Work: Its Aims, Methods, and Results," 5.

Fitzgerald and cap the total children at the Day Nursery.[36] In this instance, Hylton's insistence on curtailing the program was overruled by Fitzgerald, who no doubt saw the Day Nursery's economic benefits as outweighing its social detriments.

The Day Nursery dispute was not the only instance of Hylton and Fitzgerald's differing visions for an ideal white community. An independent and strong-willed woman, Hylton often overstepped boundaries in creating programming to realize her own vision of an upstanding white community that ran counter to Fitzgerald's. Hylton and Fitzgerald's different visions came to a fore were at odds chiefly when it came to Hylton's creation of the Schoolfield Savings Fund.

The Savings Fund was a program at the Welfare Building that helped mill children learn frugality and steady saving for their future economic stability. Hylton had based the program on similar work done in northern settlement houses such as the Light House and College Settlement in Philadelphia, which Hylton herself had visited. After returning from this scouting expedition in Philadelphia, Hylton convinced her welfare colleagues that a program of thrift would not only encourage saving, but would also steer children away from "injudicious habits" unfitting for an upstanding white citizen such as "Coca-Cola drinking" and "cigarette smoking."[37] Confident in their authority and "personal knowledge" of the kind of programs that millhands needed, Hylton and her welfare staff began the Schoolfield Savings Fund in earnest without Fitzgerald's full knowledge.[38]

Upon discovering this program Fitzgerald reprimanded Hylton for not consulting him before its implementation. While his letter to Hylton is lost, Hylton's extant response reflects her attempts to appease a disgruntled executive. While Fitzgerald could happily promote the transformative power of welfare to change millhands into "nobler souls," the details of that nobility

[36] Hattie Hylton to H. R. Fitzgerald, June 1, 1914, Box 30, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[37] Hylton to Fitzgerald.

[38] Hylton to Fitzgerald.

did not, apparently, include economic stability.[39] The greater economic stability a millhand had, the less reason he had to abide by his mill work, and thus reawakening one of management's biggest challenges: recruiting and keeping steady, loyal labor. Yet Hylton defended her decision to create the Schoolfield Savings Fund, arguing that Fitzgerald did not have enough "intimate knowledge" of welfare work as her staff did. The Savings Fund, Hylton argued, was a "very important branch of our [welfare] work," by creating upright, sober, and thrifty white citizens.[40]

Ultimately, Fitzgerald's implicit criticism of Hylton's attempt to create economically sound mill families did not end the Savings Fund. Years after this dispute, the Savings Fund earned praise in a 1920 showcase of Schoolfield in the *Southern Textile Bulletin's* Peace and Prosperity edition. By that year, the article reported, the Schoolfield Savings Fund had well over 1,200 participants and several mill boys had reportedly saved over a hundred dollars each, with one boy "saving to pay his way through college."[41] Even though it was under the auspices of management at Dan River Mills, the Savings Fund encouraged young white mill children to aspire to life beyond the mills. While Hylton advocated programming that would allow this aspiration to become a reality, Fitzgerald pushed back on her efforts to bring real economic change to millhands and her audacity in implementing the program without his knowledge.

Defining a White Masculine Ideal

Management had multiple outlets for shaping their white workers, and potential white workers: the Baltimore Avenue School. This public school, funded both by Pittsylvania County and Dan River Mills, stood just south of the Welfare Building and offered the promise of education to millhands without having to sacrifice the company's reliance on the family labor system. This 1913

[39] Harry Fitzgerald, as quoted in King, "A Cultural Innovation That Failed," 56.

[40] Hylton to Fitzgerald, June 1, 1914.

[41] "Peace and Prosperity Number: Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills," *Mill News*, October 14, 1920, 72–73.

brick school was built next to an earlier clapboard 1905 eight-room schoolhouse on the same street.[42] In contrast to the earlier clapboard, brick-piered school, the 1913 school boasted a brick exterior, built in a simplified Prairie Style with an elongated entry tower and broad, multi-paned windows on each of its two stories. The new school evoked the calm strength of moral rectitude that came with just enough academic training. Embellished with sunlight by the large exterior windows, the school's central hallways were simple in design, with original wooden floors guiding students to a total of twenty-six classrooms on the perimeter of the basement level as well as the perimeter of the first and second floors. The second floor held a large auditorium and gathering space for students, staff, and teachers, while the finished basement supplied utilities and storage for the school.[43]

The Baltimore Avenue school especially served a dual purpose as a center for profit-maximizing and education.[44] The school's dual purpose is most revealed in its location, strategically oriented towards residences, but within easy walking distance to the mills to the north. Ethel Knick, who went to work at the mills in the 1920s when she was sixteen, recalled that boys often entered the mills as early as twelve and girls at thirteen, often underpaid in comparison to their millhand parents. "The mill needed help," Knick explained in a 1984 interview, and "the more children, the better" for the mill's bottom line.[45]

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[42] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 110.

[43] W. Scott Smith et al., "108-5065-0081 Schoolfield School Complex" (Department of Historic Resources, Richmond Virginia, 2008), https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/108-5065-0081/.

[44] Cathy L. McHugh, *Mill Family: The Labor System in the Southern Cotton Textile Industry, 1880-1915* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 57.

[45] Knick, interview.

Figure 31. A photo ca. 1939 of the 1913 school on Baltimore Ave. Photo courtesy of the Library of Virginia, WPA Collection.

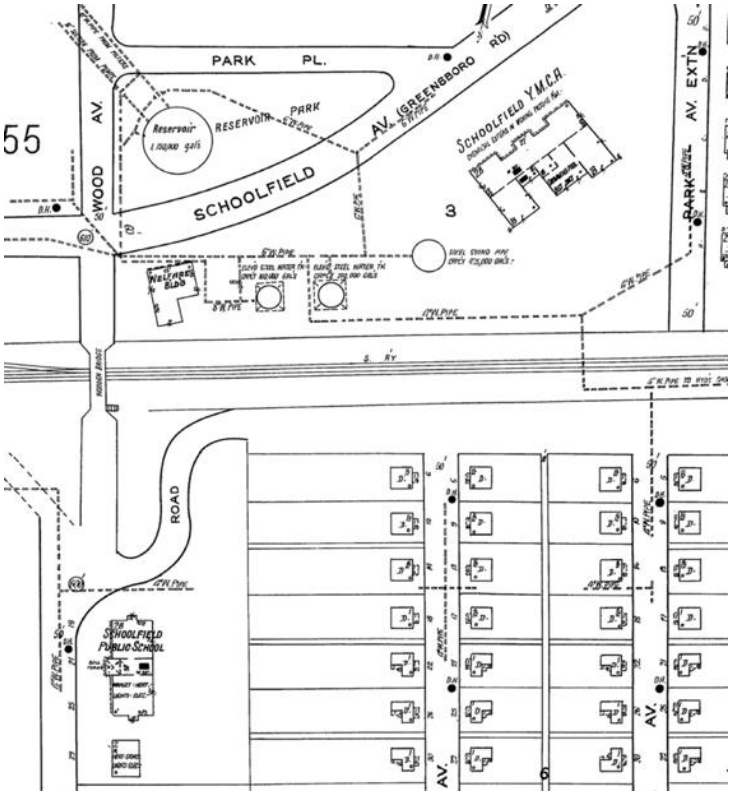

Figure 32. Seen in the lower left, the Schoolfield Public School was situated on a main access point from the mills to the southern residential district. Sanborn Map Co. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Danville." 100ft to 1in. Sanborn Map Co., 1920, 52.

Led by a separate branch of welfare staff, the village's school system deftly balanced millhands' educational aspirations that could lift them to a life beyond the mills with mill work itself. In the first years of the village school system, the company only offered schooling through the seventh grade. By 1922, the company expanded its offerings through tenth grade. Executives at Dan

River used company funds to partially pay teachers' salaries. Three months out of the ten-month school year were paid by the company, the other months were paid by Pittsylvania County. Company funds also went to support all of the kindergartens offered in the village, and the entire salaries of all home economics teachers.[46] Early childhood education and home economics were vital investments for the company. Funding for these programs ensured the stability of workers' homelife and the continued work of mothers and children. Like other school systems supported by southern textile companies, in Schoolfield, the public school provided, as historian Cathy McHugh has observed, a mechanism for screening future millhands and the training ground for "developing desirable worker skills and traits."[47]

To oversee this training center for disciplined workers, mill management hired another single, childless woman, Rose Brimmer, as principal of the Schoolfield school system. Born in 1875, Brimmer was an 1895 college graduate from the State Female Normal School, a two-year women's college that eventually became Longwood College in nearby Farmville, Virginia.[48] After her two years there, Brimmer worked most of her life as a public-school teacher in Danville. When Brimmer was thirty-eight in 1913, she was elevated from Danville teacher to Schoolfield principal, overseeing the mill village's entire school system, which included the West End School and the 1913 School on Baltimore Avenue.

In her singledom and childlessness, Brimmer exerted her maternalism not by having children of her own, but by practicing a constant public maternal gaze over Schoolfield villagers. Under the watchful eye of Brimmer, schools became the mechanism for both orderly Anglo-Saxon training as

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[46] Smith, 248.

[47] McHugh, *Mill Family: The Labor System in the Southern Cotton Textile Industry, 1880-1915*, 56.

[48] "Alumnae News: Bulletin of Longwood," (Longwood College, 1949), 9, https://issuu.com/greenwoodlibrary/docs/bulletinoflongwo1949long.

well as worker surveillance. Brimmer wielded her new status as a professional woman to critique Schoolfield families with a demanding mother's judgment. Schoolfielders today recall having once held in their archives a complete survey of workers, undertaken by Rose Brimmer in the early 1920s, though it has since been lost. According to Schoolfielders, this comprehensive survey accounted for every family in the mill village, noting unswept floors, unkempt children, and every unemployed husband.[49] This surveillance was not meant to promote hygiene or moral rectitude alone but offered close oversight in the women-led project of worker transformation into an Anglo-Saxon ideal.

As a natural extension of Dan River's broad surveillance of workers, the school with Brimmer at the helm kept regular reports of students beyond their academic progress. If children in the school system could not conform to a specific set of Anglo-Saxon ideals, including being energetic and industrious, they were expelled. Brimmer wrote extensively to Fitzgerald regarding the schools' activities, budget, personnel and students, especially in one particular case of a problem student named Theodore Thomasson. Brimmer described Thomasson as the most trying "of all the boys we have handled at Schoolfield." At fourteen years old, Thomasson had taken his time getting to the seventh grade, Brimmer noted, and an intelligence test had demonstrated his "mental deficiency." In his school report documenting his educational progress from 1917 through 1923, teachers described Thomasson as a "queer child" as well as "lazy," "listless," and "indifferent." Despite teachers having been "very patient" with the boy, Brimmer argued that he had "been shiftless since he started school," and his future was dim. Brimmer determined that "heredity and home environment are both against him," citing a rumor that Thomasson's father was a drinker and had been out of work for two weeks. The student himself had even "smoked cigarettes from his early childhood," Brimmer added, demonstrating Thomasson's inheritance of his loafing father's

[49] Dana Reagan, personal communication with author.

poor behavior. A lazy student was ultimately ill suited for productive mill work. Brimmer decided that Thomasson be excluded from the Schoolfield system and sent off to a school "for boys of his type" elsewhere.[50] If students could not demonstrate at an early age their potential manhood through productivity, there was no future for them in the Schoolfield community whose character was guarded by women like Brimmer.

Women were not spared from a similar expectation of productivity. Nearly half the Dan River workforce in the early twentieth century, young girls and women were trained at early ages to practice "the great lessons of obedience and subordination, cooperation and self-sacrifice, [and] loyalty" through school programs in the village. In remarks made at a Schoolfield girls' athletic banquet, for instance, Brimmer praised the physical education program at Schoolfield in developing "moral, social, and civic ideals." In practicing athletics, Brimmer argued, Schoolfield girls, were "better workers at school and in the Mill" and each would eventually reach her final goal of womanhood as a "better home maker." This well-trained domestic maternalistic figure would carry with her the "spirit of good sportsmanship" knowing not only how to lead and win, but also how to follow and "take defeat like a man."[51] Through a critical school program, workers' womanhood was cultivated through deference to the home and to the mill, where their individual aspirations would be thwarted, and their future economic rewards few. Rehearsed in school and in the mill, subordination and productivity would, as executives hoped, make these women better mothers and better industrial workers for the mill's profitably but not the millhand's.

Hylton Hall and the Failed Balance of White Feminine Ideals with Productivity

Built to the west of the Baltimore Avenue school, Hylton Hall was another hub created ostensibly for workers, but still primarily served the mill's profit interests without sacrificing

[50] Rose Brimmer to H.R. Fitzgerald, December 14, 1925, Box 9, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[51] Rose Brimmer, "Rose Brimmer Remarks," March 28, 1924, Box 9, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

executives' commitment to a vision of proper white southern women. Hylton Hall was finished in 1919 as a dormitory to house single female workers during World War I, when a shortage of men compelled more women into industrial roles. Named for Hattie Hylton, the building honored this woman who had devoted "best energies of her life" to Schoolfield's welfare program.[52] Hylton's work in the village had attained a "place of honor" with residents of the village, especially the three women who had suggested her name in a company-sponsored contest to name the new boarding house. Even though some management had been opposed to "fancy or family names" for buildings in the past, they all had, by Fitzgerald's reports, decidedly agreed with the residents, finding the name Hylton Hall both "appropriate and businesslike." By 1919, the tail-end of the Progressive era, Hattie Hylton had achieved a perfect balance of professionalism and sentimentality in the village.[53] As Hylton's namesake, Hylton Hall became an encouraging symbol for other single women to similarly give their life's energy to the work and community of Schoolfield in their rightful feminine place.

Admired as a "handsome and modern club building," Hylton Hall was designed by J. Bryant Heard, the architect who had designed Dan River's other welfare buildings.[54] Sharing the same author as the Welfare Building and YMCA, Hylton Hall similarly boasted a brick exterior Classical Revival Style for which Heard was known. Despite some similarities in material and design, Hylton Hall was a much grander building than the village's other welfare buildings. Six stories in height with classical columns and a proud full-height porticoed entrance, Hylton Hall stood apart in design and placement from the other welfare buildings, which were oriented along West Main Street in closer

[52] "Vast Scheme of Welfare Work Carried on by Riverside and Dan River Mills."

[53] H.R. Fitzgerald to Hattie Hylton, June 28, 1918, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[54] "Schoolfield Dormitory to Be Completed in Fall Will Cost Corporation $150,000," *Danville Register*, February 24, 1918, [clipping].

proximity to the industrial and commercial life of the village.[55] The boarding house's placement in the village was at once a cultivator of womanhood and a haven for Dan River's much-needed white female labor.

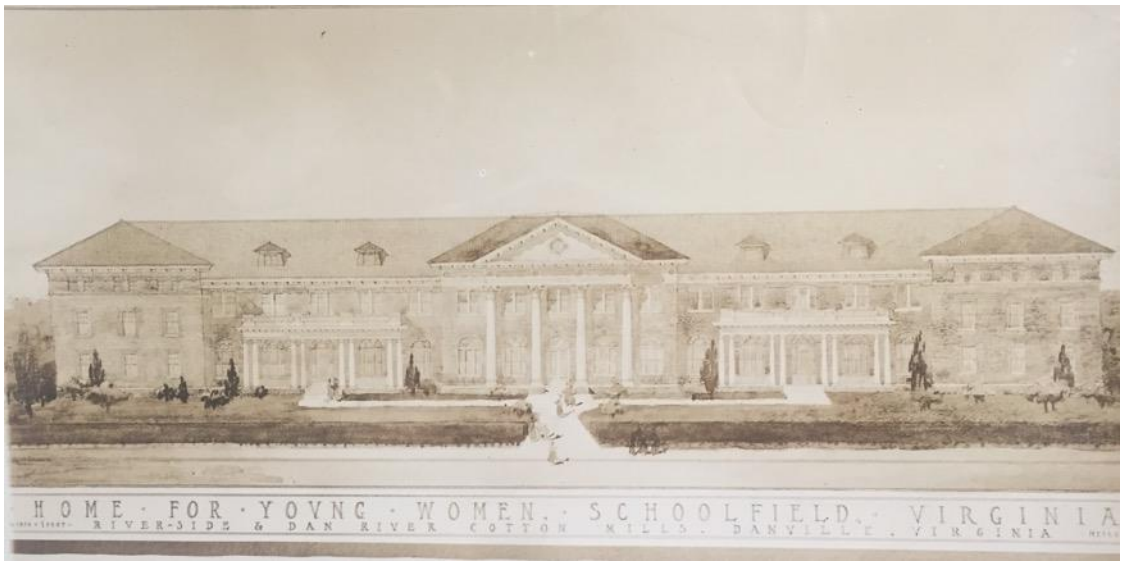

Figure 33. An early architectural rendering of Hylton Hall ca. 1918.Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, Southern Historical Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill.

Built in an E-shape along with its front elevation facing north towards the mills, Hylton Hall sat along Railroad Avenue, a cross street that ran perpendicular to southern residential streets of Richmond and Baltimore avenues. Though on the southern side of the railroad tracks, Hylton Hall was discreetly connected to the mills via an underground tunnel that allowed residents to travel safely to the mill site without the danger of crossing the railroad. The building's north-south orientation offered views of the mills to the north and family residences to the south. These views were the harbingers of hoped for careers for these women, whose lives had to fit into dual duties as fulfilling both maternal and marital roles as well as an industrial role.

The investment in these single women, who were often assigned positions that paid less than male workers, was concealed even in the construction of the building. Built on a steep slope, Hylton

[55] Sarah McPhail and Marcus Pollard, "108-5065-0082 Hylton Hall" (Department of Historic Resources, Richmond Virginia, April 2009), https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/108-5065-0082/.

Hall's front northern elevation facing the street near the railway gave the impression of a stately three-story dormitory. The topography of the Hylton Hall site buried the building's storied depth. Below the two upper and main-ground floors were three subterranean floors with sunlit windows on the southern elevation. The building's southern elevation showed its six-story immensity and the true largess of Dan River's investment in this home and social club for single women. In the hopes of gaining productive, cheaper workers, Dan River management had commissioned this seemingly modest building and hid the real largess of its investment.

Company management worked closely with the architect Heard and Hattie Hylton herself to make every aspect of the design speak to the pillars of white femininity: harmony, sociability, health, and homelife. Hylton Hall's main floor featured a grand staircase with a large dining room behind it, and kitchen, complete with an ice maker and refrigeration for the summer months. Other floors were accessible via elevators in east and west wings of Hylton's E-shaped design, as well as via a service staircase to the rear of the elevators. The second floor featured residences in the wings and a central parlor and reception room. Young women were allowed to receive male company in this space within twelve "neatly fitted out individual" three-walled parlors with glass doors. The parlors could encourage courting, while the glass doors allowed an "official chaperone," the matron assigned the floor of the building, to keep a close eye on romantic rendezvous. Besides romance, Hylton Hall's second floor was devoted to health, expanding the beds at the Welfare Building with an eight-bed infirmary behind the parlor around the southern perimeter of the floor. Within the dedicated infirmary space, one room was quartered off for those with contagious diseases such as Influenza, which had plagued Schoolfield in 1918 and nearly overwhelmed the medical clinic at the

Welfare Building. The third floor was reserved for more residences and twelve rooms for guests, which were at first offered free for the girls' parents for occasional visits.[56]

The lower floors in Hylton Hall offered subterranean spaces for entertainment and recreation and the hidden world of the Black servant class who stewarded the building. The first subfloor beneath the main level had a large auditorium with a "sizable stage" and dressing rooms for "lighter entertainment" such as club theater. This sub-floor also featured classrooms for "millinery and dressmaking," as well as storage rooms, and a dining room for servants. The second sub-floor was dedicated to physical activity and nature, with a large swimming pool, gym, and community greenhouse. Additionally, this floor housed the servants' quarters, which, as a promotional local article was sure to note would be "widely separated from the other residential quarters," such as the upper floors where white residents lived. Serving as cooks, maids, and laundresses, Black women and at least one Black "man-servant" also had rooms in Hylton Hall.[57] As was common in the Jim Crow south, separation of Black from white via different walkways, corridors, and housing was critical to maintaining an image of white feminine decency by adhering to strict racial segregation.

Using a building's verticality to segregate spaces by race was common practice in the early twentieth century south. The "basement solution" of relegating Black facilities "out of sight of whites" on a subterranean floor, for instance, has been discussed by architectural historian Robert Weyeneth in his article analyzing the distinctive architectural form of racial segregation.[58] Separation of Black servants from those they served was not, of course, a recent phenomenon. Thomas Jefferson's retreat of Monticello is probably the best example of such a separation. Thanks to

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[56] "Schoolfield Dormitory to Be Completed in Fall Will Cost Corporation $150,000"; "A Model Colony Home for Unmarried Women Mill Workers," *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 25, 1918, [clipping], Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[57] "Schoolfield Dormitory to Be Completed in Fall Will Cost Corporation $150,000."

[58] Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past," 30–31.

dumbwaiters of Jefferson's own design, enslaved Black people remained hidden from the dining room, yet still could service dinner via a pulley system they operated in the basement level of Jefferson's Charlottesville estate.[59] Centuries later, Hylton Hall participated in the long southern practice of hiding racial hierarchy through architecture.

From the top floors to the bottom, Hylton Hall was built to order the lives of female workers, who were critical to the mill's productivity and their broader social mission of transformative white work that took place in this southern section of the village. Situated in a liminal space amidst industry and homes, executives demonstrated Hylton Hall's purpose: to develop its residents into "good women of high ideals" who would "'in the very nature of things" go forth with the purpose of creating a home of their own.[60] Hylton Hall housed women who would be trained as productive workers at the mill and productive mothers and wives for the mill's future families.

The harmony of the design and use belied the contested process of Hylton Hall's creation. Hammered out between Hattie Hylton and President Harry Fitzgerald, Hylton Hall's final design was not reached easily or amicably. Fitzgerald at first consulted regularly with Hylton on the design of the dormitory, as Hylton would oversee the girls' home upon its completion. Yet the two failed see eye-to-eye on the building's design and expenses. In one correspondence, Fitzgerald chided Hylton for overstepping her authority on the design, and for making suggestions that he saw as economically unsound. On at least one occasion Hylton had corresponded directly with one of the architects of the building on the design, advocating for private baths for welfare staff, who lived at the ends of each residence hall. Again, Hylton neglected to consult Fitzgerald first before suggesting this addition in the design of the building. Reviving an old quarrel from the early days of the Savings

[59] Alice Gray Read, "Monticello's Dumbwaiters," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 48, no. 3 (1995): 168–75, https://doi.org/10.2307/1425351.

[60] Dan River Cotton Mills, "Hylton Hall: A Commodious and Attractive Home for Young Women," 1920, Hylton Hall, Danville City 108-5065-0082, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

Fund, Fitzgerald admonished Hylton for favoring costly middle-class material amenities instead of industrial economy when she insisted on private baths for Hylton Hall staff. Though Fitzgerald declared he would defer to her judgment, he urged Hylton to consider that these matrons were not accustomed to such a high "standard of surroundings" that demanded such costly design and extra plumbing. Matrons at Hylton Hall should be happy, Fitzgerald suggested, to share baths with the women whom they would have to oversee for their work in the building.[61] Because this particular building no longer exists and the original blueprints are absent from the archive, it is difficult to conclude who ultimately won this battle between a social welfare expenditure on private baths and maximally profitable economics for the mill. From what documents remain, however, it is clear that Hylton Hall's design struggled to balance mill management's economic and social aims.

In operation as a women's dormitory, Hylton Hall could not maintain a sound economic plan or serve as the mill's hoped-for haven of cheaper female labor. After the first year of its opening, Hylton Hall failed to maintain full or even majority occupancy. In January of 1920, Fitzgerald anxiously wrote to Hylton that "the economic situation [of the Welfare Department] at present is not good and the size of your payroll, fuel account, etc. are out of all proportion to the number of girls being served."[62] Fitzgerald also recommended that Hylton exercise "a little less 'nerves'" when directing her staff in the Welfare Department and a more "spirited consideration" of the views and judgments of her colleagues and superiors.[63] In April, he again reminded Hylton that the "weak point in your present system" is an "entirely too large an overhead expense for the comparatively small number of boarders at Hylton Hall." Fitzgerald told Hylton that the economic situation of Hylton Hall would hinder its power to have "far reaching" influence among women in

[61] Fitzgerald to Hylton, June 28, 1918.

[62] H.R. Fitzgerald to Hattie Hylton, January 22, 1920, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[63] Fitzgerald to Hylton.

Schoolfield.[64] The hard fact was that Dan River had few single women in their workforce. Of about 4,000 workers in 1920, 2,600 of those were women, and only about fourteen percent of those women were single.[65] The family labor system, upon which the company had relied to recruit and retain workers, had, in this instance, worked against executives hopes to entice cheaper female labor to the village. Even with these facts readily apparent at the time of the dormitory's construction and after, Fitzgerald placed the blame on Hylton. In the first half of 1920, Fitzgerald reprimanded Hylton for having unsound economic judgment and being far too dismissive of his direction.

By December 1920, Fitzgerald's admonishments gave way to more extreme repercussion. Hylton was placed on six months' leave beginning in January 1921 for "complete rest and recreation before restoration of your health and strength."[66] Hylton's brief retirement was anything but that. Fitzgerald quickly hired Maud Flippen to replace Hylton. As Fitzgerald's sister-in-law, Flippen could be more easily persuaded to take his direction, unlike her predecessor. When Hylton wrote to Fitzgerald at the end of her retirement to resume some similar work with the company, Fitzgerald simply replied that "our plans for the next term of the welfare department do not count to put any opening that we are in a position to offer you at this time."[67] Fitzgerald sought to correct the mill's welfare expenditures by freeing himself of Hattie Hylton, whose progressive, independent spirit was often at odds with Fitzgerald's own desire to shape Schoolfield according to his ideals.

Fitzgerald's divestment of Hattie Hylton as a leading member of welfare staff also signaled his increasingly different leadership style than his predecessor Ad Schoolfield. Schoolfield had hired Hylton and begun the village welfare program in a small way around professional women's work in

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[64] H.R. Fitzgerald to Hattie Hylton, April 2, 1920, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[65] Fitzgerald to Ordway, April 22, 1920.

[66] H.R. Fitzgerald to Hattie Hylton, December 28, 1920, Box 3, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[67] H.R. Fitzgerald to Hattie Hylton, June 29, 1921, Box 4, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

millhands' children's health and education. Under Fitzgerald's increasing influence, the company began shifting investments to more male-focused programs. Hattie Hylton's departure reflects this shift away from feminine-only spaces. By 1925, Hylton Hall was integrated with single men and eventually also welcomed newly married couples without children into its once exclusively female spaces. By then, the building was used more as a more general community hub, hosting dinners and offering the gymnasium and pool to women in the village in order to make ends meet.[68] With Hattie Hylton gone and these spaces occupied by both men and women, management's grand material investment in supporting women's roles as workers diminished.

Conclusion

Through the conscientious design of feminine-organized spaces such as the Baltimore Avenue School, Day Nursery, Welfare Building and Hylton Hall, Dan River executives furthered two fundamental goals. Welfare work was the work of firstly of getting "[their] people contented" and secondly "to be better workers" for the mill.[69] Industrial maternalism provided the foundation for such contentment and attempted to further management's economic goal of social training for more productive workers. Welfare buildings in Schoolfield evoked order and rationality as the single, white, and professional women working within them offered a blend of maternal handling and scientific management for the heretofore unregulated homelives of the first generation of Schoolfield millhands. By developing classes focused on savings and home economics, offering childcare for mothers at the mills, and keeping their maternal gaze on workers' homelife and schoolchildren, Hattie Hylton and Rose Brimmer created avenues for Dan River Mills to reap a profit through the security of a stable workforce. Designed to create avenues for larger living, welfare activities also attempted to transform poor whites into a privileged white community of

[68] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 254–55.

[69] Hanckrel to Fitzgerald, June 6, 1913.

industrial citizens, providing fodder for the myth of white supremacy by correcting the embarrassment caused by a primordial white folk. Provided with the necessities for health and wellness, plied with wholesome recreation, and shaped by the built environment, executives attempted to transform the folk of Schoolfield into acceptable citizens who would know the art of living within the Anglo-Saxon corporate community.

Yet the visions of such a white ideal failed to be consistently delivered. Where female welfare staff supported the education and well-being of workers in an effort to bring them to a level of economic security, self-sufficiency, and traditional family roles, their methods of industrial maternalism was at odds with the welfare capitalism practiced by management. In opposition to their female welfare staff, management held a vision of the ideal white worker that kept him and his family bound to the company through mutual obligation. Where management funded welfare with the goal of worker productivity that would ostensibly support notions of white supremacy, women welfare workers implemented the program to uplift the family, economics, and education of millhands that sometimes cut against management's profit goals for the company.

Female welfare workers like Hattie Hylton were strongheaded in their visions of the ideal white worker. Early professional work at Dan River offered the stamp of scientific rigor to perceived feminine virtues involving maternal caretaking and home life.[70] With welfare offering economic legitimacy to women's work of homemaking and family life, Hylton was empowered to assert her own method of realizing this ideal in Schoolfield.[71] As the domestic was professionalized in the Progressive era, Hylton's confidence was tied inextricably to the New Woman, a new independent, poised feminine ideal that supported a more active and public life for women than preceding generations. Buttressed by national and regional precedents, southern white women's

[70] Herring, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages*, 286.

[71] Wright, *Old South, New South*, 124–25.

maternal duties like Hylton's were transferred from the private realm and legitimized in more public, professional spaces of training and welfare for workers.

Differing opinions over the best methods for transforming the folk into white citizens ultimately led to Hylton's ousting from Dan River altogether, and a reconsideration by Harry Fitzgerald of future investments in industrial maternalism. As the company's investments in women's and children's welfare offered diminished returns on creating white productivity, Fitzgerald shifted his vision for Schoolfield. With Hylton's firing and the integration of Hylton Hall, Fitzgerald turned his focus to male millhands, making investments in welfare programs that promised returns on both white masculinity and mill productivity.

CHAPTER 4: SOUTHERNING THE VILLAGE AND TRANSFORMING THE MAN: CONFEDERATE MEMORIALIZATION AND SOUTHERN MASCULINITY IN SCHOOLFIELD

Introduction

In the late 1920s, Danville's once "smaller sister," the textile city of Greensboro, North Carolina, boasted 52,000 people, dwarfing Danville's population of a mere 21,000.[1] Greensboro had outpaced Danville through land grabs of its surrounding mill villages like those owned by the Proximity Manufacturing Company, a textile competitor of Dan River Mills. Since 1907, city leaders in Danville sought to mimic Greensboro's annexation strategy and boost Danville's own prominence as a major southern city. Over the years, various city councilmen put pressure on Dan River Mills to give over their village of Schoolfield so it could be absorbed into greater Danville.[2] By the late 1920s, this pressure for annexation of Schoolfield grew. To explore the ramifications of such a forfeit, in 1927 Dan River president Harry Fitzgerald wrote to the president of the Proximity Manufacturing Company, Bernard Cone, to ask what the company might expect from annexation. Cone offered Fitzgerald a warning in reply, underscoring the threat of annexation, which would destroy the pastoral, independent distinction of southernness with the nationalizing influence of urbanity.

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[1] "Annexation Should Not Be Delayed," *The Bee*, October 22, 1928, 6, Newspapers.com; U.S. Census Bureau. T1 Danville, Virginia Total Population, 1920. Prepared by Social Explorer, https://www.socialexplorer.com/tables/Census1920/R12746076.

[2] For a few examples of city leaders rallying for Schoolfield annexation, see H.C. Ficklen, "Greater Danville: Facts for Annexationists," June 9, 1924, [clipping], Box 9, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; "Is Annexation Being 'Played Down,'" *The Bee*, December 5, 1927, Newspapers.com; "Annexation Opposed in Schoolfield," *The Bee*, February 23, 1927, 1; "Mills Openly Opposed to Annexation," *The Bee*, October 22, 1928, 1, Newspapers.com.

In his letter to Fitzgerald, Cone complained of annexation's urbanization of the southern mill village his company had once entirely controlled. In the letter, Cone discussed the consequences of having his own mill village annexed by the city of Greensboro, North Carolina a few years prior. Cone cited a litany of grievances. He complained of the new city taxes imposed on the company and the burden of negotiating responsibility for keeping up sewage systems, roads, lighting, corps of police and firemen, and public schools that had once been entirely under the company's domain. Cone was not happy about having his mill village annexed and explained his grumpy attitude as one "of an un-reconstructed southerner." Comparing annexation with the south's reunification with the nation after the war, Cone wrote to Fitzgerald that he had been in the fight and had not yet "gotten over the surrender." Though a new generation who did not remember the war could be happy as "urban citizens," in Cone's opinion, annexation's consequences of "urban residents, urban duties, urban regulations, and urban taxes" made little sense when it came to running a productive and profitable cotton mill in the south.[3] Born in 1876, Bernard Cone was not a Civil War veteran, but that fact did not stop him from identifying as an anti-northern, anti-modern, anti-urban southerner.

Cone's identification with the "unreconstructed" south and ambivalence towards urban annexation of mill villages highlights a central paradox of southern textile companies. These companies sought to secure white social, political, and economic power in the south through paternalistic control over the daily lives of their poor, white mill laborers. To maintain their control and independence from urban municipalities, southern textile companies had to design and develop their own urban oases that replicated almost all the systems of a municipality from streets to schools to sanitation. Even as mill managers opposed urbanity as a threat to southern distinction, they wielded it to maintain intimate control over their labor in the first decades of the twentieth century.

[3] Bernard M. Cone to H. R. Fitzgerald, February 16, 1927, 9, Box 15, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

Yet these same mill managers could not wholeheartedly embrace urbanization. The racial hierarchy of the antebellum south was still in their interest to maintain, along with labor control. Management continued to make investments in the built environment as a way to assuage two overarching anxieties about race. First, as white elites saw it, interracial mixing threatened the biological and cultural integrity of the white race. At the same time, the culture of the so-called "purer Anglo-Saxon[s]"—those recruited for textile labor at the mills from the hills of rural Appalachia—undermining the biological determinism of white supremacy.[4] With their "run-down poverty and ignorance" inherited from their "precarious existence on mountain farms" these supposedly purer Anglo-Saxons weakened the myth of white supremacy.[5] White supremacy in Virginia was marked by the central doctrines of self-sufficiency, creativity, industry, and the desire for "leadership and mastery," over the natural world as one young scholar in 1924 opined.[6] Without the continuous expression of these traits across the white race, the foundation of white supremacy could not hold as a publicly accepted myth. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Dan River executives' fear of the dissolution of whiteness was compounded by their experience that the so-called purest of that race could not uphold the central tenets of whiteness.

Early attempts to establish white supremacy in the Commonwealth centered on defining Blackness. White statesmen in Virginia's General Assembly attempted to define Blackness in order to derail racial equality after the decimation of slavery and the Civil War. Revising an 1866 definition of Blackness, in 1910, Virginia's General Assembly broadened the definition of Black person from a

[4] As quoted in Brown, "Industry Is Giving Us a New South: A Story of Great Changes," 36.

[5] 1907 board meeting minutes and Fitzgerald correspondence as quoted in Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 108–9.

[6] Raymond G. Wickersham, *Industrial Democracy at the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills* (DeFuniak Springs, FL: Breeze Print, 1924), 13.

person with one-fourth to one-sixteenth or more of "[N]egro blood."[7] Relegating more Virginians into the racial category of "colored" in this 1910 legislation, Virginia's politicians attempted to sanctify the white race by making whiteness a more exclusive category. Two years later, the Virginia General Assembly created the Bureau of Vital Statistics. Headed by noted white supremacist Walter Ashby Plecker, the bureau reinforced the definitions of Black and white through birth certificates and later marriage certificates that included the race of the mother and the father, the husband and the wife. Guided by new definitions of Black and white, these vital records were used to eradicate any uncertainty about race by keeping track of Virginians' racial lineage and preventing the rise of mix-race people, which threatened the so-called purity of the white race.[8]

In 1924, as historians J. Douglas Smith, Jason Ward, and Richard Sherman have noted, these legislative efforts to encode white racial superiority culminated in the 1924 Racial Integrity Act.[9] The 1924 Racial Integrity Act, which attempted to prevent miscegenation through a narrow definition of whiteness, was one expression of the increasing fear that white supremacy was being threatened.[10] Unlike previous racial acts in Virginia, the 1924 Racial Integrity Act did not define Blackness; it

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[7] "Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia Chp. 103," 1866 1865, 84–85, HeinOnline, https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.ssl/ssva0267&i=1; "Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia Sec. 49," 1910, 581, HeinOnline, https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.ssl/ssva0267&i=1.

[8] As Sherman has noted, from 1890 to 1910, census data reveals that the number of mulattoes in Virginia nearly doubled and then dropped considerably in 1920. This drop led some white elites to believe that Black people were passing as white, and these passing Black people were a threat to the future of the white race. Richard B. Sherman, "'The Last Stand': The Fight for Racial Integrity in Virginia in the 1920s," *The Journal of Southern History* 54, no. 1 (1988): 70, https://doi.org/10.2307/2208521.

[9] J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Jason Ward, "'A Richmond Institution': Earnest Sevier Cox, Racial Propaganda, and White Resistance to the Civil Rights Movement," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 2008; Sherman, "'The Last Stand': The Fight for Racial Integrity in Virginia in the 1920s."

[10] J. Douglas Smith explores how Anglo-Saxon clubs led by Virginian John Powell and Earnest Seveir Cox in the 1920s exposed an ideological division about how to perpetuate white supremacy. In one camp were white elites, who viewed race relations in paternalistic terms, and in the other were racial extremists such as Powell, who called for racial purity in an era of racial anxiety. J. Douglas Smith, "The Campaign for Racial Purity and the Erosion of Paternalism in Virginia, 1922-1930: 'Nominally White, Biologically Mixed, and Legally Negro,'" *The Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 1 (2002): 65–106, https://doi.org/10.2307/3069691; For a more extended version of Smith's discussion on racial anxiety in Virginia, see Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*.

instead offered a definition of whiteness as a "person who has no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian."[11] This exclusive category was meant to reverse what many white elites worried was "the passing of the great race" through the gradual integration of white people with the influx of immigrant populations and Black people in the United States.[12] In these restrictive definitions of Black and white, Virginia's legislature articulated the anxieties of a white elite class, who demanded the codification of their racial ideology, that they feared would slip away with racial integration.

White elites across the south were not only anxious about the disappearance of whiteness, they were also inwardly concerned that the so-called purest Anglo-Saxons were perhaps not so pure in their outward habit and custom, especially when it came to mill men. Despite the desirability of this 'native' Anglo-Saxon's racial heritage, his rural cultural heritage pegged him as a linthead, as a "cracker and hillbilly" to the south's white middle class, and to the white elite industrialists who had recruited him and his kin to their mill villages.[13]

At Dan River, executives directly focused their efforts on creating an upstanding white community from the "primordial folk," those poor whites recruited from the hollers of the rural south.[14] As labor historian Robert Zeiger has defined it, "primordial folk" was how many contemporary journalists, academics, and upper middle-class observers classed novice millhands, the "denizens of the isolated rural South," who held onto their seemingly backwards culture even as

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[11] "Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia SB 219," 1924, 535, HeinOnline, https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.ssl/ssva0267&i=1.

[12] Madison Grant's book *The Passing of the Great Race,* written in 1916, and Earnest Sevier Cox's *The White Race,* 1923, are examples of how fearful white people cloaked their racial anxieties with dubious and unfounded scientific and historical evidence. Thomas Dixon's novels such as *The Leopard's Spots*, 1902, and *The Klansman*, 1905, were earlier examples of literature that argued for white supremacy and laid down its tenets of racial integrity, racial segregation, and white dominance of the social, economic, and political spheres through the power of fiction.

[13] Brown, "Industry Is Giving Us a New South: A Story of Great Changes," 34–36.

[14] Zieger, "From Primordial Folk to Redundant Workers," 173.

they were introduced to modern industrial work.[15] Management of these southern industrial worlds had to somehow save textile families from devolving into a dreaded "hereditary occupational group" and "social type" that was seen to be cultivated by textile mill villages, where pooled white mill men were allowed to loaf and let their wives and children work, essentially giving up the culturally accepted role of a white patriarchal provider.[16] Mill managers in the south and at Dan River thus had a dual battle to fight: one to combat Black equality, and one to uplift white mill men from lapsing into the New South's Anglo-treason of being an unproductive loafer.

In Danville, white city leaders and industrialists used notions of idealized white masculinity and Confederate memorialization to distinguish white male southerners as such amidst urbanization and industrialization. With total control over the built environment of Schoolfield, mill managers balanced urban amenities with emblems of white male southernness. These symbols that heralded masculinity through Confederate and pre-war south were almost banal as they blended into millhands' daily experience. Integrated into the built environment, these symbols acted as non-traditional Confederate memorials that mill management used to unite rural millhands under a more respectable mantle of the "unreconstructed southerner" under management's control rather than the nationalized, independent urbanite that annexation was feared to bring.

Naming Schoolfield

In Danville, men like Dan River Mill president Harry Fitzgerald worked to preserve a distinctively southern memory in the mill village of Schoolfield. Though the village was laden with the amenities of urban life, those same amenities had to be balanced with reminders of southern place. With hallmarks of a shared southern past, management attempted to engender not only a white exclusivity of the mill village, but also the sense of community cohesion along racial lines.

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[15] Zieger, "From Primordial Folk to Redundant Workers," 172; Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 132.

[16] Ryhne, *Some Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Their Villages*, 77.

While urban amenities may have lured millhands to Schoolfield, urbanity only worked for mill management as long as it could be a mechanism for them to be in control. Unlike Schoolfield's city neighbor of Danville, the village had to offer the amenities of an urban life without the urbanizing influences that management had seen come to bear among workers in its downtown Danville Riverside Division. Those millhands who worked in places like North Danville, or the racially diverse Mechanicsville were given access to neighbors who worked in other industries or were defined as a different race. To escape the unregulated mingling that a heterogenous urban world encouraged, Dan River management ensured that Schoolfield's urban amenities would be balanced with the signifiers of a shared southern past. Within this homogeneity, management rooted the built environment with landmarks of a southern antebellum hierarchy that could hold relevance amidst modern urban life.

The first step in establishing a shared southern past was uniting millhands in the village with the heritage of the three Schoolfield brothers, who had been among the company's white elite founders. Around 1910, the village name had changed from its original appellation of Jaffa to what became its forever name of Schoolfield. Jaffa is a variation of Joppa, which in the Bible is the territorial border of the Tribe of Dan, for which the city of Danville was rumored to be named.[17] Denoting a sort of holy land of abundance, Jaffa welcomed the mill families who first came to the village. Once families settled, however, mill management quickly changed the village's name to one that located millhands within a smaller framework of the mills' founding fathers, offering them the symbolic capital of a shared heritage with the founders. The official name of Schoolfield was cited first in the 1909 by-laws of the company, which dictated that annual stockholder meetings be held in

[17]For biblical references to Joppa/Jaffa, see Joshua 19:46 and Acts 9:36-11:13.

Schoolfield, Pittsylvania County, Virginia.[18] Yet even before this accepted appellation, a son-in-law of one of the Schoolfield founders had suggested it to management to replace the previous name of Jaffa.[19] This naming recognized the Schoolfield family's "importance to the company" and the new all-white mill community.[20]

Few other mill villages in the south named their villages after their company founders. Most mill villages instead defined themselves through variations on mill owners' names. At one mill in North Carolina, for instance, the mill and the village combined both the founders' surnames, Gray and Love, to make the "pleasant and euphonical" name of Loray.[21] Another turn of the century mill town in North Carolina, Kannapolis, similarly was derivative of Cannon Mills owner's name, James William Cannon. Unlike these other southern mill towns, Schoolfield village's name attached residents intimately with the founders' own surname, becoming—in name if nothing else—much like a family, with a shared heritage and a shared future.

As architectural historian Derek Alderman has pointed out, naming can be a "powerful vehicle" for social construction by "promoting identification with the past and locating oneself within wider networks of memory."[22] Mill management imposed the name of Schoolfield onto the

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[18] "By-Laws of the Stockholders of the Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, Incorporated.," 1909, 1, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[19] King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*, 70 note.

[20] Robert E. King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield (1853-1931): A Biographical History of the Leader of Danville, Virginia's Textile Mills During Their First 50 Years* (Richmond, Virginia: William Byrd Press, 1979), 70; Schoolfield is a variation of the Scottish name Schofield, which is a combination of the Middle English word for hut (schole) and pasture (feld), a familiar description of the farms from which these millhands had been recruited. "Schoolfield Name Meaning & Schoolfield Family History at Ancestry.Com®," https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=Schoolfield.

[21] Gastonia Gazette, January 18, 1900 as quoted in "Building Loray, 1899-1912 | Digital Loray," http://loraydigital.prospect.unc.edu/timelines/building-the-mill/.

[22] Derek H. Alderman, "Place, Naming, and the Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, ed. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Press, 2008), 195; Originally published in 1945, George Stewart's classic text dreamily describes how names came to be inscribed on the American landscape. Stewart writes that names "lay thickly over the land" as Americans "spoke of them, great and little, easily and carelessly...not thinking how they came to be. Yet, the names had grown out of the life, and the lifeblood, of all those who had gone before." His naturalistic explanation does little to reveal the intentional power of place naming that

village to locate their white workers within a shared heritage. The Schoolfield village was named in celebration for, and in recognition of, the Schoolfield men, who were seen as an exemplar of southern white power and economic ingenuity. To some Schoolfielders, the name of the village honoring the Schoolfield family founders seemed to have "just happened," but the intentionality behind the name of this white space is clear.[23] By uniting millhands to this single southern name, management not only had honored the company's familial roots, but attempted to cultivate among workers a feeling of being like a family, where everyone knew his and her place. Management similarly this unified feeling in their employment of a new form of Confederate Memorialization in Schoolfield. This memorialization was not created through stone or granite, but through everyday markers of place and belonging that could hold the past and modernity in the same space.

New South Confederate Memorialization

In the decades following the Civil War, the south was a place of contradiction. Many southerners in the former Confederate states were buoyed by a forward-looking faith in the future, heralding the New South creed of urbanization, industrialization, and the expansion of democracy to all classes of white and Black American men. The forward-looking ideology of the New South was not just an economic creed, but also promised to reshape the social and political culture of the south through the adoption of northern industries and commercial ventures. Fueled by new investments in industry and business, this new, more democratic region would have "fifty homes for every palace," and an economy that would meet "the complex needs of this complex age," as New South booster Henry Grady proclaimed.[24] In establishing the promise of the New South creed, Grady claimed that

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Alderman describes. George Rippey Stewart, *Names on the Land: A Historical Account of Place-Naming in the United States*, New York Review Books Classics (New York: New York Review Books, 2008), 3–4.

[23] Knick, interview.

[24] Harold E Davis, *Henry Grady's New South Atlanta, a Brave and Beautiful City* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 19.

the south would rise to the demands of a modern era by acculturating with the social, economic and political structures of the nation.

Yet the New South creed also "vaguely set apart those whose faith lay in the future from those whose heart was with the past," as C. Vann Woodward eloquently wrote.[25] Those set on the past kept their hearts with the memory of the Civil War, making this singular event of embarrassing defeat an attribute of peculiarity of the southerner. A distinctly southern preoccupation with "poverty and defeat" was difficult to reconcile, as Woodward has argued, with the American creed of innocence, abundance, and success.[26] While some historians since Woodward have pushed back against the idea of southern distinctiveness, many otherwise agree with historian Woodward and southern historian Sheldon Hackney's attribution of the region's historical experience of the Civil War as being central to any understanding of the south.[27] As Hackney describes, the "southern self-consciousness" shaped by defeat fostered a particular worldview that denied any responsibility and located "threats to the region outside the region and threats to the person outside the self."[28] By the turn of the century these outside threats, as Hackney and historian Reiko Hillyer have discussed, included modernity writ-large. Modernity included everything from urbanization, commercialization, industrialization, to the federal government and civil rights.[29] To combat these perceived threats,

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[25] Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, ix.

[26] C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History*, 3rd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 21.

[27] Goldfield rests his study of the south in the Civil War and its memory, although he does not concede the south has an immutable character. Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War*; While the literature on southern distinctiveness is broad, historians David Blight and James Cobb have written most extensively on this topic in recent years. Both Blight and Cobb focus their analyses of the south on the region's racial reckonings from the Civil War to Civil Rights. Blight, *American Oracle*; Cobb, *Away down South*.

[28] Sheldon Hackney, *Magnolias without Moonlight: The American South from Regional Confederacy to National Integration* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 18.

[29] Reiko Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South," *The Public Historian* 33, no. 4 (November 1, 2011): 35–62; Hackney, *Magnolias without Moonlight: The American South from Regional Confederacy to National Integration*, 18.

southern elite in places like Charleston, Savannah, and Richmond created a "useable past" to assert cultural significance and social authority through the historical memory of the Civil War.[30] Through preserving historic buildings, acquiring Confederate artifacts, and erecting monuments, elite white southerners created a notion of the south as a genteel, pastoral, and chivalrous place "saturated with history" in opposition to their constantly renewed, commercialized, and materialistic northern counterpart.[31]

Many scholars see this southern effort to forge Confederate identity manifested in ceremonial markers of granite and stone. These scholars, such as Kirk Savage, Grace Hale, Reiko Hillyer, and Fitzhugh Brundage, see nineteenth and early twentieth-century traditional monuments as being powerful public symbols that romanticized the Confederacy in defense against the threat of a modern New South economic reality that emerged after the Civil War.[32] These symbols, placed in cemeteries, near courthouses and in other public areas defined southern heritage as hostile white opposition to the "by-products of modernity," that threatened to obliterate the cultural distinction and unity of a single white south.[33]

Early Confederate memorials and commemorative activities stood in stoic opposition to these principles by celebrating the Lost Cause of the Confederacy and the racial hierarchy that reigned in the slave-economy of the antebellum south. A cultural narrative that became popular

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[30] Stephanie E. Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 6.

[31] Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 3; Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory*; Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*; Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997); David W Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

[32] Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*; Grace Elizabeth Hale, "Granite Stopped Time: The Stone Mountain Memorial and the Representation of White Southern Identity," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (April 1, 1998): 22–44; Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South"; Brundage, *The Southern Past*.

[33] Hackney, *Magnolias without Moonlight: The American South from Regional Confederacy to National Integration*, 18.

among white southerners after the Civil War, the Lost Cause grew to become an organized mythos that memorialized Confederate honor in the face of that defeat, propelling the creation of monuments and other ritual demonstrations across the South between the 1870s through the 1920s. The narrative of a heroic and honorable South, even in the face of defeat and devastation, required that slavery—the preservation of which the Confederate states fought to maintain—be rewritten as a benevolent institution.[34] As Brundage has highlighted, white women's Confederate memorialization efforts following the Civil War "created enduring obstacles to the production of alternative renderings of southern history and...alternative visions of the southern future."[35] Other historians such as David Blight and Grace Hale have similarly demonstrated how white elite women of the Daughters of the American Revolution and United Daughters of the Confederacy wielded festival occasions of monuments and memorialization rituals to forge an "authoritative tradition" in a historical narrative glamorizing Confederate heritage.[36]

Through the Lost Cause narrative, elite women wielded an instrument of social control that supported the rise of racial segregation by the early twentieth century. As many historians of southern memory have discussed, early nineteenth-century Confederate memorials were most often funded and erected by white women's volunteer groups across the South.[37] As historian Karen Cox notes, the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), founded in 1896, was made up mainly of men of the New South, "more committed to their own business and political success than to the success of

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[34] Clayton McClure Brooks, *The Uplift Generation: Cooperation across the Color Line in Early Twentieth-Century Virginia*, American South Series (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 5; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 292.

[35] Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 54.

[36] Brundage, 15.

[37] Excellent broad studies of the political and cultural power of Confederate memorialization include Brundage, *The Southern Past*; Bruce R. Kahler, "Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory by David W. Blight," *American Studies* 43, no. 3 (October 1, 2002): 112–13; Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*; Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*; Reiko Hillyer's account of the creation of the Confederate Museum in Richmond offers more local nuance to a broader story. Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South."

the Confederate tradition."[38] Women, on the other hand, according to Cox, had a "greater devotion to Confederate ideals and provided the driving force behind the leading Lost Cause organization" of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.[39] These women erected statues, organized parades, secured historical artifacts so that the legacy of the Confederacy the Lost Cause would endure through generations. By showcasing a glorious Confederate past, these women attempted to secure a unified southern white identity that encouraged national sympathy and awe for the loss of a genteel past, a way of life destroyed by the commercial, industrial north. Elite white women helped keep alive how the southerner was imagined in the public mind. The southerner was genteel where the American was ambitious, cynical where the American was hopeful, suspicious where the American was curious, downtrodden where the American found success.

In cities of the New South, however, none of these professed southern qualities were suitable for the businessman, southerner or not. In places like Charlotte, a textile metropolis, southerners sought to maintain their accustomed paternalistic social hierarchy of "worker and master" while still embracing the changes that would enhance the modern south's economic future.[40] In Atlanta, new, sensationalized, northern technologies were embraced in a reconciliation of Confederate memory and modern amusements.[41] In Richmond, Confederate memorialization evolved with the residential and civic development of Monument Avenue, a planned development with "stylistically homogeneous" residences in the Colonial Revival style and impressive statues of Confederate figures were part of a conscious effort to commemorate the Confederate past and

[38] Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 5.

[39] Cox, 5.

[40] Hanchett, *Sorting out the New South City*, 48;53.

[41] Ina Dixon, "Artifact of Modernity: The Atlanta Cyclorama and Civil War Memorialization in a New South" (master's thesis., University of Chicago, 2013).

celebrate the new leaders of an industrial era.[42] The development of Richmond's Monument Avenue signaled a twentieth century shift away from Confederate memorial from "an entirely separate zone," such as cemeteries and parks to one "fully integrated into the modern civic fabric" of a modern housing development.[43]

Competing interests in past and future similarly met in Danville which depended on a modern economy but resisted the social implications of a national definition of modernity. In Danville, leading white businessmen, politicians, and industrialists made the legacy of the Confederacy a bedrock of white residents' modern experience. Especially by the twentieth century, the legacy of the Confederacy was not celebrated as an affront to urbanity and industry, but as a harbinger of it. At the height of Jim Crow segregation in the 1910s and 1920s, Danville's elite white male industrialists took charge of the city and Schoolfield's Confederate memorialization, marrying modernity with the social order of white supremacy.

In Danville's earliest commemorative activities, female-led organizations played a large role in Confederate commemoration as they did throughout Virginia and the south. Local chapters of the Ladies Memorial Association, established in 1872, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, founded later in 1896 as the Anne Eliza Johns Chapter, honored Danville's Civil War veterans through preservation efforts, rituals of remembrance, and monuments to the Confederate dead.[44] Their efforts helped establish the "cult of Anglo-Saxonism," as Nina Silber has described.[45] This cult, so called because of its quasi-religious belief in, and common goal of, white supremacy, played

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[42] Kathy Edwards and Esmé Howard, "Monument Avenue: The Architecture of Consensus in the New South, 1890-1930," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 6 (1997): 93, https://doi.org/10.2307/3514365.

[43] Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 149–50.

[44] "About the Chapter, 164, and a Little History of Anne Eliza Johns," Anne Eliza Johns Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, http://aejohnsudc.com/index_files/Page400.htm.

[45] Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900*, Civil War America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 143.

an important role in perpetuating the myth of the Lost Cause in Danville through commemorative rituals, practices, and monuments. These white women in Danville raised funds for the preservation and celebration of the Confederacy through annual conventions and meetings, local historical archives, and monuments to the Confederate soldier and cause. Their efforts heralding white supremacy dovetailed with the attempt to normalize white supremacy throughout the south by making the symbols of white heritage and racial hierarchy visible in the archives and the landscape, not just Virginia's law books that dictated segregation.

Built through local women's groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, late nineteenth century Confederate memorials in Danville looked a lot like other southern cities. As Kirk Savage has explored in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997), early Confederate memorials were simple, funereal affairs, often segregated in cemeteries away from the routes of daily life. Early monuments included bronze tablets with lists of Confederate dead and simple granite obelisks. Before the 1910s, Danville only had one Confederate monument: a simple obelisk isolated in the City's Green Hill Cemetery near the tobacco warehouses and railway. That funereal monument was erected a decade after the war by the Danville Ladies Memorial Association (LMA). Alice Burton, a member of the LMA and wife of the first Dan River Mills founder and second president F.X. Burton, played a leading role in the fundraising and design efforts for this first Confederate memorial in Danville.

Dedicated in 1878, the memorial is a granite obelisk placed at the top of a prominent man-made mound. The obelisk's base featured profile reliefs of General Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson on two of the four sides of its square base. Originally, these reliefs were bronze medallions affixed to the sides of the base, but due to vandalism, weathering, or both, were later removed and placed in the offices of the local Anne Eliza Johns chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Though the bronze of the medallions was from New York, Burton made sure the

granite was from quarries in Richmond, Virginia— further solidifying the spiritual connection between the Confederate Capital and Danville through the memorial's materiality.[46]

This early Confederate monument, and the white elite women who raised the funds for it, stood in opposition to a type of modernity that boosted urbanity and technological progress as the heroes of the day. Danville's mayor and Confederate veteran Harry Wooding related as much at a 1922 semi-centennial celebration of the Danville LMA. In a prepared speech, Wooding mourned that in the modern world, "expediency is the chief word," and congratulated the LMA, who stood in contrast to expediency as one of "those quiet forces" for a "great and living and abiding principle that can never be wiped out" as long as Confederate memorialization efforts prevailed. Wooding bemoaned that in the modern Danville of 1922 "[w]e see...automobiles, street cars, and scores of people, all seeming to take no notice of anyone." Yet, Wooding exclaimed, "at least once a year we come to a pause here" to honor the Confederacy and "the bravery of her soldiers, the chivalry of her manhood and the devotion of her womanhood." Pausing to remember would, Wooding argued, perpetuate "the memory of those who laid down their lives for the cause that they held so dear," no doubt helping re-establish racial and gender hierarchies of an idealized antebellum south, too.[47] In his speech, Wooding shrugged away Danville's progressive persona with its motto of "Danville Does Things," its economic strength as one of the largest loose-leaf tobacco markets in the south, and its industrial power as home to one of "the greatest cotton mills in the world."[48] Wooding rejected these economic and modern identities, applauding LMA for their efforts at memorializing "Southern gentility" that stood as a bulwark to the modern age.[49] As a Confederate veteran himself,

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[46] "Semi-Centennial of Memorial Association," *The Bee*, June 12, 1922, 2.

[47] "Semi-Centennial of Memorial Association," 2.

[48] Meade, *I Live in Virginia*, 12.

[49] Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 157; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 323.

Wooding voiced an older generation's concern. He worried that a bucolic southern past was being drowned out by the busy trample of modern urban life, a threat to the memory of an Old South and the racial hierarchy it embraced.

By the early twentieth century, a new generation of southern men assumed leadership of southern governments and economies. Though they may have venerated the Old South's racial hierarchy, these New South men, like mill president Harry Fitzgerald, relied on modern industry and commerce for their income. No longer was it a singular anti-modern voice that spoke out through granite and stone against the bustle of city life. Instead, southern identity evolved and, with it, Confederate memorialization to fit with southern industrialists' modern designs.

In Danville, this new blend of modern and Confederate was embodied in the Sutherlin mansion, which leading industrialists and local businessmen sought to preserve by commemorating its brief role as the "Last Capitol of the Confederacy."[50] The preservation efforts of these men signaled the continued investment in the antebellum racial hierarchy through non-traditional commemorative activities that embraced tenets of the modern south. Preserving the mansion combined a cultural veneration of the Old South with the future-looking and lucrative new southern economy.

Danville had indeed served as the last capital of the Confederacy, but only for a week that coincided with the defeat of Confederate forces and the surrender of Robert E. Lee at Appomattox on April 10, 1865. During the week of April 3rd, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his cabinet fled occupied Richmond and stayed in Danville, where they heard of Lee's surrender before heading south to North Carolina.[51] Davis held cabinet meetings at the Benedict House, a private

[50] As one Danville historian has discussed, the Mansion in particular was referred, often inexplicably and incorrectly, as "The Last Capitol of the Confederacy." Jane. Hagan, *The Story of Danville.* (New York: Stratford House, 1950), 22.

[51] John H. Brubaker, *The Last Capital, Danville, Virginia, and the Final Days of the Confederacy* (Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History, 1979).

home in downtown Danville and stayed with Danville's quartermaster and tobacco tycoon, William T. Sutherlin at his mansion.[52] Built in 1858 as the elegant Italianate home of the prominent tobacconist and politician, Sutherlin's mansion stood about a mile south of downtown Danville in what would become the fashionable West End District. Sutherlin, who never fought for the Confederacy on account of purported physical infirmities, "threw open [the house's] doors" and his good wife "dispensed true Virginia hospitality," as one impassioned LMA member recounted, to Davis and his cabinet that week.[53] By the 1910s, those who experienced Davis's week in Danville firsthand along with the built environment itself were quickly disappearing. The Benedict House had been demolished for an apartment building. By 1911, both Sutherlin and his wife had died, leaving the mansion without a steward.[54] As the only building left standing from the week that Danville was the Confederate capital, the mansion played a distinctive role as a memorial for the antebellum south and the Lost Cause of the Confederacy.

Fifty years after the Confederacy's defeat, Danville boosters sought to showcase this history, and dubbed Danville as the "Last Capitol of the Confederacy." Following the death of Sutherlin's wife in 1911, leading businessmen, including then-treasurer at Dan River Mills Harry Fitzgerald, worked to preserve and enshrine the mansion where Jefferson Davis had stayed. When the mansion and its four acres were divided up for sale for building lots, a prominent lawyer and owner of the local paper, Rorer Abraham James, and a Danville tobacconist Alexander Berkeley Carrington, raised hell and money to get the building saved. Carrington rallied prominent figures in Danville to help raise the funds to save and sanctify the mansion. One hot July evening in 1912, he sent word to

[52] "Library Furore Casts Doubt on Authenticity of Claims as to Davis' Last Capital," *The Bee*, June 5, 1923, 1; Hagan, *The Story of Danville.*, 21–23.

[53] "Semi-Centennial of Memorial Association," 2.

[54] "Semi-Centennial of Memorial Association," 2.

the mayor of Danville and former Confederate veteran, Harry Wooding, and other prominent Danvillians including Harry Fitzgerald. In his letter to Fitzgerald, Carrington explained that "some quiet work" was being done to acquire the mansion. "Knowing you are interested in this matter," Carrington went on, "I have called a meeting of a few gentlemen...we should begin to formulate some plan for buying this property."[55] The resulting plan was to raise $20,000 towards the $48,000 purchase price. Dubbing the mansion the "Last Capitol of the Confederacy" would help boost the project's fundraising appeal and solidify the sanctity of the Confederacy in the public imagination.[56]

By December of that same year, this group of prominent men—Fitzgerald among them—had established the Danville Confederate Memorial Association, which would eventually put a down payment on the property.[57] Though spirited, the men fell short of their goal, raising only $18,000 towards the purchase price of the mansion, even with the local United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Ladies Memorial Association helping with the fundraising. Their funds were enough for a first payment however, and the Danville Confederate Memorial Association became the new owners of a memorial to a brief Confederate past.

By 1916, the continued private stewardship of the Confederate monument wavered. With no further funds raised toward its purchase and upkeep, the house was transferred to the municipality, with taxpayers footing the bill for the Confederate memorial. If the white citizens of Danville could not make donations towards the Confederacy freely, they would be forced to pay them with their regular government dues. When the City of Danville took over the debt on the mansion in 1916, the house became the new white Danville Public Library, sharing the space with the United Daughters

[55] A.B. Carrington to H.R. Fitzgerald, July 26, 1912. Box 32, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[56] "Semi-Centennial of Memorial Association," 2.

[57] Hagan, *The Story of Danville.*, 21.

of the Confederacy.[58] The cooperative model was one of the many ways that Danvillians merged Progressive-era ideals of an egalitarian white public with romantic ideals of an aristocratic, Confederate, and white southern past.

Stamping Visions of Whiteness with Appellations of the South

Confederate place-making in Schoolfield also helped set expectations and privileges of being white. In a building boom in the 1910s and early 1920s, Schoolfield swelled with new residential streets that completed the layout of the village. Unlike the commonplace names of Schoolfield's northern streets—such as Oak Ridge, Wood, and Park, these southern cindered streets bore names of Confederate figures General Robert E. Lee, General J.E.B Stuart, General Stonewall Jackson and Major John Pelham.[59] Naming streets after historical characters from the Confederacy was a critical tool for establishing white cultural dominion amidst an otherwise urban, industrial landscape.

The same Dan River executive, Harry Fitzgerald, who helped save the Sutherlin mansion, also worked to create new Confederate landmarks in Schoolfield. Like the Sutherlin mansion, these Schoolfield streets signaled mill executives' efforts to depoliticize and naturalize Confederate heritage by embedding it in their workers' everyday experience of home and community in a new industrial world. Dan River management sought to align their workers—most of whom had never lived through or participated in the Civil War—with far-flung historical figures of a different class, generation, and venerated legacy, at least among these white elite southerners. Orienting millhands within a distinctly southern community, management sought to balance the urban New South and with the old, wielding an idealized southern heritage to strike the balance. Schoolfield street appellations helped buffer the industrial and urban reality of this southern mill village, uniting

[58] Hagan, 21–22.

[59] *Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills, Schoolfield, VA Map*, 1-400 (Schoolfield, Virginia: Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills, August 1942), City of Danville, Engineering Office.

residents under a shared past.

Dan River's veneration of historical figures of the Confederacy was not a shared practice in other mill villages across the south or even in other neighborhoods in Danville. Other mill villages of similar size and development as Schoolfield shirked away from embedding the Confederate in the built environment. In the Loray mill village in Gastonia, North Carolina, streets running north to south were simply numbered (First, Second, Third) and cross streets had names like "Liberty."[60] Though one street was named Vance after the Confederate military officer and North Carolina governor Zebulon Baird Vance, Vance was also known as a staunch promoter of the New South that the southern textile industry hoped to embody. Of the 500 homes scattered along these streets in Loray, some were rented out to Black workers at the mill in a segregated. section. With streets connecting both Black and white workers to the mill, street names in Loray did not linger in the shadow of the Confederacy but reflected the affected optimism of the New South.[61]

In other working-class Black neighborhoods in Danville, residents were similarly freed from Confederate remembrance in the everyday built environment. The all-Black village of Almagro, about half a mile away from Schoolfield, was developed around the same time as the all-white mill community. In Almagro, street names celebrated the leading families of the independent village, such as Tilden, Vance, Mabin, and Walters, reminding residents of the village's prominent Black families.[62] In this all-Black village near Danville, local families were central to grounding locals in a sense of place and community pride, not through a far-flung connection to historical figures of a different class and generation.

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[60] *Map of Loray Mill Village*, 1936, 1 in = 200 ft, 1936, http://lib.digitalnc.org/record/6771.

[61] Mattson, Alexander & Associates, Inc., "Loray Mill Historic District: National Register of Historic Places Nomination and Inventory," August 2000, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

[62] Rosser Lee Wayland, *If Streets Could Talk* (Raleigh, N.C.: Lulu, 2011), 53; Sanborn Map Co., *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Danville*, 100ft to 1in (Sanborn Map Co., 1915), 30, Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867–1970.

In Forest Hills, an upper-class real estate development in Danville near a small women's college, street names reflected natural themes rather than Schoolfield's historical ones. Developed by Robert Addison Schoolfield, Forest Hills became the new fashionable residential district in Danville and soon was home to Danville's elite, such as the Schoolfield brothers. Elegant grand homes designed by prominent architects such as J. Bryant Heard lined the leafy streets united in a naturalistic theme. Street names like "Mountain View" and "Riverview" offered industrialists a respite from Danville's urbanity, which they helped develop everyday through their tobacco and textile companies.[63] Unlike Schoolfield mill village, the homes in Forest Hills were unified with nature, not a Confederate legacy.

The street names in Danville's new, elite developments like Forest Hills suggest that in the early twentieth century, industrialists did not need to reassure themselves of their supremacy or modernity through Confederate memorialization. Men who lived in this development like Ad Schoolfield and Harry Fitzgerald were secure enough in their economic, social, and political supremacy as leading men of the city to live without Confederate reassurance in their residences. However, when it came to the other classes of Danville's citizens and Schoolfield's workers, Confederate memorialization was used to embrace and teach white supremacy in tandem with a modern urban world that would have corrupted those without full feeling of the southern heritage defined through losing the Civil War.

A shared southern heritage and Confederate memorialization in Schoolfield were not simply reactionary nostalgia for a vision of an aristocratic past in the face of economic and social change. Rather, these instances of southernizing the landscape were mechanisms for shaping collective identity by grounding white residents in a shared white heritage. Confederate heritage was not just in

[63] Sanborn Map Co., *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Danville*, 100ft to 1in (Sanborn Map Co., 1920; Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867–1970), 33.

the graveyard—it was in the City's white public library and it was in the streets of Schoolfield, uniting residents there with a heritage that glorified white supremacy. Through patriarchal appellations and non-traditional Confederate monuments, the lie of white supremacy slipped in easily with the ways of a modernizing and rhetorically progressive south committed to white uplift.

Performing Whiteness and Authority: Parades in the Village

Within this southerned landscape, management coordinated extensive pageantry to normalize white supremacy. Under president Harry Fitzgerald, Dan River management attempted to assert white authority and bolster the dignity of industrial work through invented rituals, such as pageants and processions, that celebrated the unity and orderliness of white millhands whose celebration of productivity fell in line with an American creed of happiness through economic productivity.[64] Led by Fitzgerald on horseback, these parades and processional rituals sent a public message to millhands, Danvillians, and Dan River Mills' customers who attended or heard of the parades. Management used parades as a galvanizing tool for white community cohesion through the display of management's masculinity and benevolence. Management also wielded this pageantry to publicly showcase how Dan River fulfilled the Schoolfield motto of "the character of the men and women of the plant woven into every yard."[65] For Danvillians and the mill's national customers, the parades, documented in national newspapers and periodicals, demonstrated that Dan River Mills was not just a textile company but also a corporation that produced quality white "human product."[66]

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[64] In discussing invented rituals, I draw from Hobsbawm's concept of invented tradition and his emphasis on how communal values and "norms of behavior" are set through repetitive community rituals that "establish continuity with a suitable history past." Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.

[65] H. R. Fitzgerald, "H.R. Fitzgerald Address to Industrial Democracy Congress," August 9, 1923, 5, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[66] As quoted in Laura Davies, "Harrison R. Fitzgerald: Cotton Mill President," *Volta Review*, January 1924, 9.

Managements' boast of their human product began with village parades that ran frequently beginning around World War I. Prior to the first World War, Dan River Mills had sponsored May Day festivities for workers at Ballou Park, funded an Exhibit Fair, where schoolchildren could show off their "tiny bolts of gingham" to the public in addition to their handiwork making jams, and the mill had held an annual Christmas tree ceremony at the Welfare Building.[67] Yet World War I reinvigorated management's enthusiasm for employing patriotism to stabilize their white workforce, and soon transformed the labor-leaning May Day festivity into a celebration of industry's contribution to the American dream defined by white economic power and productivity. While workers were still given a celebration sponsored by the mill, management under Fitzgerald used these festivities to emphasize company loyalty through appeals to American values of industry and dignified white work.

Parades encouraged patriotism, especially during the war, but management also relied upon these events as key motivators for white workers. In a 1918 letter to Fitzgerald, the superintendent of the mill's Welfare Department Hattie Hylton discussed how a parade could help speed up the "output of our plant" by encouraging millhands as well as spectators to "feel the dignity that really attaches to all productive effort today."[68] Nothing that the Welfare Department had tried before, Hylton argued, would "present to our people in so forceful form your ideas" of productivity and efficiency as a parade that featured "willing and efficient producers...bearing bolts of cloth, pushing spool carts, etc."[69] Rose Brimmer, the principal of the village school system, sent Fitzgerald another letter which outlined the plan for the parade and assured the president that "elaborate costuming is reduced to the minimum [cost]" and the rally would not interfere with the mill's work as it would

[67] Hylton, "A Fifteen Minutes' Talk on The Schoolfield Welfare Work: Its Aims, Methods, and Results," 6.

[68] Hattie Hylton to H. R. Fitzgerald, "Patriotic Rally," May 6, 1918, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[69] Hylton to Fitzgerald, 1; Rose Brimmer to H. R. Fitzgerald, "Patriotic Rally," May 16, 1918, 3, Box 28.

take place on a Saturday afternoon. Fitzgerald agreed to the rally, which featured the village band, "loyal little citizens" of kindergartners carrying American flags, and workers bringing up the rear in banner-decorated trucks that boasted their departments at the mill.[70] Leading the procession was Fitzgerald himself, draped in white ribbons, presiding over the spectacle on horseback.[71]

By 1922, the Danville paper could declare that Dan River's parades and celebrations in Schoolfield was an anticipated "annual event" for the broader Danville community.[72] Fitzgerald saw the value of these company-led celebrations and the patriotic rally of 1918 especially, which set in motion an annual spring tradition in Schoolfield until the 1930s. The regular May festivals and parades helped management boast their white human product as much as their textile product. One outsider reporter of *Mill News* promoted management's extensive efforts to make the lives of Dan River's white workers "more pleasant and profitable." On visiting Schoolfield, the reporter observed that there were thousands of industrious inhabitants who foiled the popular notion of a sweatshop mill toiler or denigrated social type. In Schoolfield, this writer observed, there were only "well dressed young girls, boys of good physique, happy-faced mothers and satisfied-looking men" to be found.[73] In these public parades and festivities, management at Dan River Mills aimed to "dispel the stigma" attached to cotton mills and white operatives through the spectacle of white industry, loyalty, and group cohesion.

[70] Brimmer to Fitzgerald, "Patriotic Rally," May 16, 1918, 2.

[71] *Dan River: Celebrating a Century of Progress, 1882-1982* (Dan River, Inc., 1982), 27.

[72] "Two Festivals at the Schoolfield Graded Schools," *The Bee*, May 19, 1922, 2.

[73] "Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills," 72.

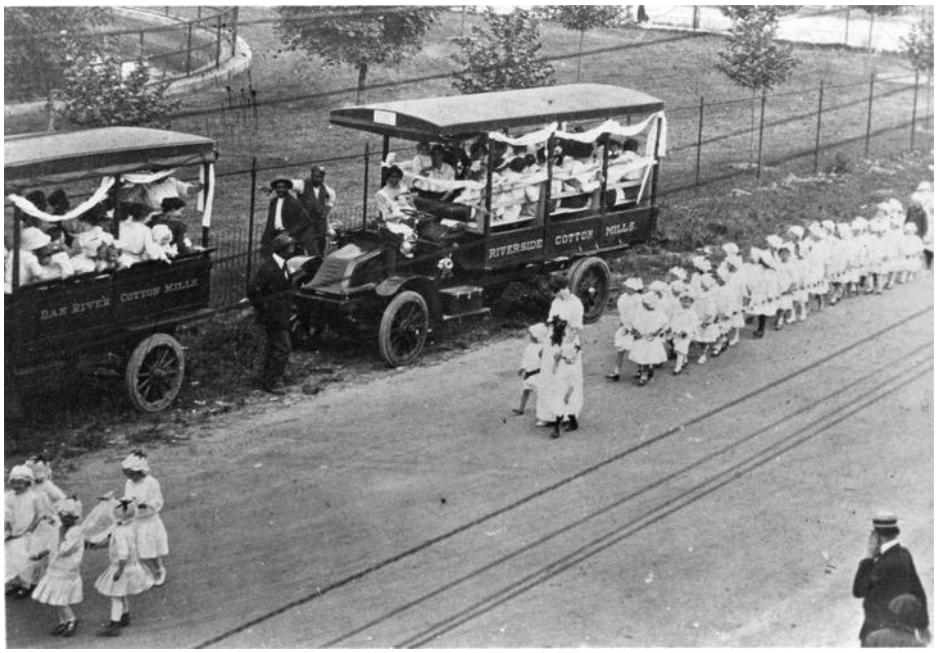

Figure 34. At a May Day parade, both the Riverside and Dan River Divisions lined up in open-air buses as Black drivers looked on but did not participate. A black woman, possibly a domestic servant, can be seen in the front seat of one of the open-air buses holding a white child. Photo courtesy of Clara Fountain and featured in her book Danville: A Pictorial History (1978).

Figure 35. Fitzgerald, featured on the horse above, leads uniformed "loyal little citizens" in the 1918 patriotic rally with Danvillians flanking the festivities on either side. Photo courtesy of Clara Fountain and featured in Danville: A Pictorial History (1978).

Black workers at the mill were not part of management's concern so long as they stayed in their place as janitors, scourers and truck drivers.[74] While Black workers were barred from participating in the promenading portion these parades, they were not completely excluded from the mill's celebratory activities once the parade was over. There is record of at least one instance where Fitzgerald invited Black workers at the mill to join in a July 4th picnic at Ballou Park, the large municipal park adjacent to Schoolfield's eastern boundary. H.F. Hughes, a Black Danville barber who joined his friends at one such picnic in 1920, wrote to Fitzgerald directly after attending. Hughes praised Fitzgerald for the "kindly consideration given my people, the Colored Employees" and for providing not "scantily as is too often done, but abundantly" in offering Black workers and their friends food during the picnic.[75] Hughes added that he had lived in Danville for fifty years, but

[74] Hylton, "A Fifteen Minutes' Talk on The Schoolfield Welfare Work: Its Aims, Methods, and Results," 9.

[75] M.F. Hughes to H.R. Fitzgerald, July 9, 1920, 1–2, Box 2, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

could "recall no event that has given me more pleasure than seeing such behavior and treatment accorded to my people."[76] A man who had been in the city since before the Danville race riot of 1883, Hughes closed his letter by signing it "your obedient servant," an appeal to accepted racial hierarchies that Fitzgerald heralded.[77] Fitzgerald responded to the letter promptly, writing to Hughes that it was a pleasure to see "the whole-hearted cooperation displayed by all parties" at the picnic.[78] As long as Black workers knew their subservient place, a segregated space was available to them at company celebrations.

Figure 36. An undated image of Black men at Ballou Park, possibly making "enough of the delicacies so befitting for the occasion" of one of the mill's annual picnics, which were usually segregated affairs. Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The company's frequent parades and processions aimed not only to remind Black workers of the acceptability, even the inevitability, of racial segregation. The events also masked Fitzgerald's power over both Black and white workers with a show of benevolence. Such was the impression of Rev. J.E. Hicks, a white Baptist minister who wrote to Fitzgerald after attending this same July 4th, 1920 picnic. He praised Fitzgerald lavishly, writing that it was "a beautiful sight to see you mingling

[76] Hughes to Fitzgerald, 3.

[77] Hughes to Fitzgerald, 3.

[78] H.R. Fitzgerald to M.F. Hughes, July 12, 1920, Box 2, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

and mixing with the employees."[79] Such a democratic spirit, Hicks gushed "cannot but help to bridge the chasm between those who represent labor and those who represent capital" and had thus helped to develop workers' "spirit of loyalty."[80] Hicks made sure to note his admiration for the orderliness of the picnickers, whose behavior showed "in the most striking way" the "educative and uplifting" policies of the mills.[81] In mingling with white workers, and keeping a racial segregationist order, Fitzgerald had succeeded in showcasing to the broader Danville public the mill's edifying influence on both Black and white Danvillians who knew their place as "obedient servants" and loyal white workers.[82]

Fitzgerald's welcoming attitude toward Black workers was a fragile one. More often than not, these parades were an attempt to not only exclude Black workers, but also to remind white workers of their supremacy. The parades in Schoolfield thus participated in the broader city, state, and region-wide demonstrations of white supremacy: lynching. Like parades, lynching was another sensationalized mechanism white groups used in the south to violently disrupt Black communities.

Lynching became the "the logical extreme of the daily policing of black behavior" already practiced in the hiring policies and living restrictions of Black workers at Dan River.[83] In the Commonwealth of Virginia, this policing dovetailed with the violence of at least 109 documented lynchings, and one very public lynching of a Black Danvillian named Walter Clark in 1917.[84] Though only a few lynchings that ravaged the southern states between 1890 and 1940 occurred around

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[79] J.E. Hicks to H.R. Fitzgerald, July 6, 1920, Box 2, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[80] Hicks to Fitzgerald.

[81] Hicks to Fitzgerald.

[82] Hughes to Fitzgerald, July 9, 1920, 3.

[83] Seth Kotch, *Lethal State: A History of the Death Penalty in North Carolina*, Justice, Power, and Politics (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 29.

[84] Seth Kotch, "Unpublished Virginia Data from a Red Record, Lynchings in the South," 2020 2017.

Danville, the public display of white power set the foundation for future demonstrations of white pride and unity against Black southerners.

The lynching of a Black man named Walter Clark in Danville bucked the Virginia lynching trend that historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage describes, in which the majority of extralegal executions of Black people were led by private, small groups.[85] Clark's lynching was a mass demonstration of white Danvillians who, through "broad popular participation" asserted white control over Black criminality, as they deemed it. In October of 1917, Walter Clark allegedly shot his wife in the arm at their home on Newton Street in Danville, near the tobacco warehouse district and two and half miles from Schoolfield. When white police came to arrest him at his home, Clark barricaded himself within the house and shot at the police, killing one officer. As the fight between police and Clark escalated, at least 3,000 white people gathered at Clark's house, newspapers reported, waiting to shoot Clark themselves.[86] The crowd threw dynamite according to some reports, and eventually set fire to the house, causing Clark to run out to escape the flames. As he ran, the crowd "riddled his body with bullets."[87] Clark's body was then "seized by the heels by the infuriated crowd and dragged nearly a block."[88] A Reidsville paper that covered the story justified the death by commenting on Clark's migrant ways and degenerate family life. At the end of the report on the lynching, the article noted that Clark had previously resided in Reidsville, where he still had a wife and several children living, in addition to the wife he had allegedly wounded in Danville.[89] Clark's death certificate

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[85] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930*, Blacks in the New World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 66.

[86] "Reidsville Negro Kills Officer in Danville," *Reidsville Review*, October 17, 1917, 1, Newspapers.com; "Danville Officer Shot," *Salisbury Evening Post*, October 13, 1917, 5, Newspapers.com.

[87] "Negro Runs Amuck," *Alexandria Gazette*, October 13, 1917, 3, Newspapers.com.

[88] "Danville Officer Shot," 5.

[89] "Reidsville Negro Kills Officer in Danville," 1.

similarly deemed his death a "justifiable homicide."[90] After the public lynching of Walter Clark in 1917, white Danvillians were primed to equate Blackness with degeneracy and criminality and whiteness with order, control, and authority.

As historians W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Amy Louise Wood, Grace Hale, and Mattias Smångs have argued, lynchings sent a violent message to Black Americans who were deemed criminals when they disrupted the south's accepted racial hierarchy.[91] Especially in the rural south, as Brundage noted, lower class white men were anxious of losing out economically to Black labor, and would often use lynching as a way to create a shortage of Black workers to secure whites workers' economic stability.[92] Wood and Smångs push the goals of lynching further, arguing that lynching had a dual purpose of targeting Black southerners and establishing the unity of white southerners who witnessed public lynchings, even if they were not direct participants.[93] White onlookers of lynchings' drama and violence, Wood concludes, helped generate a "sense of racial superiority and unity" among white southerners across class divides.[94] Public lynchings united white southerners through

[90] "Certificate of Death for Walter Clark" (Bureau of Vital Statistics; State Board of Health, October 13, 1917), Ancestry.com.

[91] Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940*, New Directions in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2009), 2; Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*.

[92] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 18–28.

[93] Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 3; Mattias Smångs, "Doing Violence, Making Race: Southern Lynching and White Racial Group Formation," *American Journal of Sociology* 121, no. 5 (March 1, 2016): 1329–74, https://doi.org/10.1086/684438; Mattias Smångs, "Whiteness from Violence: Lynching and White Identity in the U.S. South, 1882–1915" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2011), ProQuest (AAT 3451498). See also Hale's discussion of masculinity and lynching in Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, 1st ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 232–35; Hale and Seguin's discussion of lynching as spectacle also sheds light on white group identity formation and the establishment of segregationist norms. Grace Elizabeth Hale, "Deadly Amusements: Spectacle Lynchings and the Contradictions of Segregation as Culture," in *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, 1st ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 199–239.

[94] Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle*, 8.

dehumanizing displays of violence against so-regarded "bestial black men" in visible contrast to "strong and commanding white men."[95]

Through a similar public spectacle, the company led Schoolfield parades had attempted to showcase the normalcy of a racial hierarchy that celebrated white over Black. Ethel Knick, a girl in Schoolfield in the early 1920s, remembered these parades and processions well. Whether it was a "patriotic rally," or annual celebrations for the Fourth of July, Knick's mother took her to every one of these myriad events in the village.[96] In a 1984 interview, Knick remembered one year when a large parade along West Main Street featured marchers with sheets and pillowcases over their heads. "They marched up to the ballpark," Knick nonchalantly recalled, "and they burned a cross there." Though Knick related that at the time she was too young to understand "the purpose of it all" and it was a little frightening, ultimately "it was just another parade to us!"[97] In fact, this 1924 parade was the largest Ku Klux Klan rally and "naturalization ceremony" the City and Schoolfield had seen.[98] Local newspapers reported that over 600 masked men took part, led by "white-clad horsemen" galloping along West Main Street, and at least 300 plain clothes members, who kept an eye on the thousands of Danville and Schoolfield spectators who came to see the rally.[99] By the time Knick saw this KKK procession, however, there seemed to be nothing strange about demonstrating white supremacy in the streets of Schoolfield.

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[95] Wood, 8.

[96] Brimmer to Fitzgerald, "Patriotic Rally," May 16, 1918, 1; Knick, interview.

[97] Knick, interview.

[98] "The Ku Klux Klan Parade Was a Great Success," *The Bee*, July 17, 1924, 4, Newspapers.com.

[99] "The Ku Klux Klan Parade Was a Great Success," 4; "Clipping: One of the Largest Crowds in City's History Attended Ceremonial of Local Branch Klan Organization," *The Register*, July 17, 1924, Clara Fountain Collection, Danville Historical Society.

Despite this attempt to normalize Black exclusion and degeneracy in contrast to a vision of white supremacy, the reality of the parades' organization was still tied to an eroding paternalistic scheme led by Fitzgerald's welfare staff. One company-led parade in 1925 shows this diminishing power in management's white supremacist spectacle. In 1925, Dan River used the parade to save face after experiencing its worst financial year on record in 1924 when it had its first negative net earnings.[100] The head of the YMCA, Harry Spessard wrote to Fitzgerald on a change in plans for the 1925 "play festival" at Ballou Park that would emphasize efficiency and promote community pride, without having to spend much. Spessard offered to omit the kindergarten children from the parade and festivities, leaving only the older schoolchildren to be costumed. Spessard emphasized that in "by carefully guarding our advertisements" for the May festivities in local papers, staff could "incidentally inform the public that the event is of local initiative" and not a costly production put on by the mills.[101] The parade in 1925 was used to prop up white mill workers' triumph in self-reliance and governance by obscuring the mill's heavy hand and financial support of this white pageantry.

[100] King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*, 161–62; These figures are also listed in the comprehensive history of Smith, *Mill on the Dan*.

[101] H.E. Spessard to H. R. Fitzgerald, March 16, 1925, Box 11, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

Figure 36. Well-dressed female Welfare staff direct the uniformed children in a parade in the village. The parade route followed the most prominent and easterly streets of the village such as West Main Street and Park Avenue, passing the social buildings and main office of the mills on Wood Avenue. Photo courtesy of Clara Fountain.

Schoolfield parades attempted to dismantle middle-class notions of millhands as lacking social graces and democratic values. Through parades, management at once attempted to showcase millhands' inclusion into respectable white southern society as well as assert their dominion over the community of workers. While many of these programs promoted democratic or patriotic values, they were meant to establish both the hierarchy of white supremacy and the supremacy of the corporation over the individual. These demonstrations of power were meant to inspire community pride and an almost covetous admiration of mill leadership. Management's attempt to conceal their hand in coordinating these pageants at once normalized white supremacy but also contradicted their professed belief in the social and economic capital of its millhands. Organized from the top-down,

these parades ultimately were meant to assuage management's underlying belief that millhands could not demonstrate group cohesion or social graces without management's help and supervision.

Conclusion

Marrying modern urban planning with Confederate memory and southern placemaking, Dan River Mills management modernized white supremacy in an age of a new, industrial south. Through the built environment and pageantry within, management married modernity, industry, and creative power with a social category of whiteness that could protect the antebellum, racialized pastoral ideal of the south in the face of urbanity. Through the balance of both these ideals, Dan River management attempted to unify its white working community beneath shared southern heritage that embraced a racial hierarchy of white over Black.

In stamping streets with Confederate figures and marching through them with a collective stance, management attempted to mask an underlying hierarchy between executive and worker. The pageantry of a shared heritage could not mask the underlying contradiction in management's scheme to southern the landscape of Schoolfield. Southerning the landscape and trapsing through it with parades revealed management's anxiety that their workers could not live up to the social expectations of whiteness. Reminders of the Confederacy and of the mill president's authority were aimed more for Dan River management, who wielded the environment to establish a vision of southern masculinity that at once was docile and dependent, but also dynamic and productive. The next chapter explores how this continued investment in southern and American masculinity resulted in disappointing economic returns for Dan River and management.

CHAPTER 5: RETURN ON INVESTMENT: THE TENSION OF VALUE AND PROFIT IN SCHOOLFIELD

Introduction

Dan River president Harry Fitzgerald's usual responses to workers' requests for wage increases were nothing short of sermons. One 1922 letter from a group of loom fixers, who were in higher ranking positions than other mill jobs such as doffers and spinners, appealed to Fitzgerald to raise their wages. In his reply to these loom fixers, Fitzgerald questioned their loyalty to the company, their appreciation for welfare programs, and even their sanity. Fitzgerald was "surprised at both the spirit and substance" of their requests for higher wages, which showed an "amazing lack of appreciation" steady pay despite serious economic problems the entire industry had faced with a market slump in 1921.[1] "How any person of a normal mind," admonished Fitzgerald, "can fail to appreciate what Industrial Democracy has done for the members of this organization I cannot understand."[2] In requesting more pay, Fitzgerald stated that the loom fixers had failed to learn that real economic advancement could "only be made in the honest, open and deserving way of co-operation or team-work," not through—as Fitzgerald saw it—a disloyal and direct request for more money that smacked of "selfishness [and] class spirit."[3] The loom fixers had shown that their relationship to the company was based "solely on the selfish desire to get out of it all they can for themselves by constant agitation for more pay," Fitzgerald angrily accused. He concluded to the

[1] H. R. Fitzgerald to M.C. Spivey, W.R. Moss, and R.M. Moseley, November 6, 1922, 1, Box 6, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[2] Fitzgerald to Spivey, Moss, and Moseley, 1.

[3] Ibid.

loom fixers that "if the best we [at Dan River] can do for them is not enough, they should go elsewhere."[4] Because they did not show total acceptance of Fitzgerald's worldview on the relationship between wages and other social goods offered by the company, the loom fixers had shown themselves as selfish, stupid, and disloyal to the unspoken rules of Dan River paternalism.

Fitzgerald's sermonizing was not that of a cool-headed businessman, but one of an injured civic leader who felt the pang of citizens' underappreciation of the society he had created for them. In requesting higher wages, the loom fixers had blemished Fitzgerald's notions that wages were a distant second to the edifying work and social goods that came with working at Dan River Mills. Fitzgerald believed that management's investments in white masculinity through the built environment and village institutions should have been enough to dissuade workers from such gauche economic complaints. Management's visions of white productivity and group loyalty were in a direct ratio to corporate profit. Yet, as these loom fixers revealed, workers themselves did not see the relationship between the value of white masculinity and their actual wages as being so closely knit.

As this chapter shows, management's hopes for the subsequent monetary gains through greater worker productivity failed to dovetail with the investment in white masculinity. The tension between the value of masculinity and the mill's profit came into full force as Dan River faced ebbing economic markets after World War I just as workers became more assertive about working conditions and wages. In these turbulent financial times, management had to negotiate with workers between their competing visions of the relationship between the value of white masculinity and corporate profit.

[4] Fitzgerald to Spivey, Moss, and Moseley, November 6, 1922, 2.

Against the White Loafing Man: Masculinity and the Schoolfield YMCA

The worst thing a man could be in Schoolfield was a "loafer," someone who idly ignored the mill motto of "Perfect Goods, Maximum Efficiency, Minimum Cost."[5] A more costly hire, men had harder times staying employed by the same company who decried their loafing. Their consequential loafing and any instances of familial desertion were perhaps a result of the plethora of welfare activities offered to mill villagers, which allowed women to be at once mothers and workers. Rendered economically less valuable to the mill's bottom line, idle men in Schoolfield were thus further pushed to the side as poor providers, succumbing to an unenviable distinction of being less valuable to the social good of the community. A threat to Dan River management's notions of American manhood, something had to be done about these emasculated loafing white men.

The answer to this threat came in Dan River management's investment in the Schoolfield YMCA and its extensive programming, which included a baseball team and an experimental program in a company-managed union under a system known as Industrial Democracy that featured an elected congress of workers who presented bills on behalf of millhands' collective welfare. Management made monetary investments in the YMCA building they hoped would be a hub for white masculinity with its programs that encouraged productivity and group loyalty.

Dan River constructed what they deemed "the most beautiful and best equipped industrial Young Men's Christian Association of the South" in 1916 at the eastern boundary of the village.[6] Harry Fitzgerald drew attention to the building's power in cultivating brotherhood, modernity, and manliness as a way to legitimize the company's investment in such a building. No building was finer in every "grand" detail from the YMCA lobby and reading room to the indoor track suspended from the second floor of the gym and the "significant auditorium" with a capacity for 800 white

[5] Dan River Mills, "Our New Year Policy," December 26, 1915, Box 25, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[6] Fitzgerald, "The Commission upon the Responsibility of the Young Men's Christian Association," 2.

men, for whom the building had been built.[7] Within its walls, the YMCA offered night school for men, athletic spaces, a library, and pool room as well as a movie theater. The YMCA was a "monument of completeness," leaving nothing, executives assumed, to be further desired by the millhands who used the space.[8] Praised by Fitzgerald as a "human efficiency plant," the YMCA had steam heat and electricity throughout the building, a rarity in the rural south. Fitzgerald pointed out the modern design of the building, erected so that every millworker in its sprawling expanse could be "carefully supervised." Under this supervision, the YMCA had opened up "fields of enjoyment" for male workers as well as "economic influence...[making] the people more efficient in their work" for the mills.[9] The YMCA played a leading role in training millhands to be productive in the "right spirit" that held fraternity and masculinity among the highest goods.[10] The YMCA promoted Anglo-Protestant masculinity through athletics, organized recreation and educational lectures so that male millhands could "spend their leisure time...in physical, social and mental development."[11] This mission was apparently attractive to men in the village, 2,000 of whom had joined the YMCA by 1924.

[7] Fitzgerald, "The Commission upon the Responsibility of the Young Men's Christian Association," 2.

[8] H.R. Fitzgerald, "Written for 'Cotton' at the Request of Mr. Arnold," November 15, 1916, 1, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[9] Fitzgerald, 1.

[10] H. R. Fitzgerald, "Rotary Speech: The True Ethical Standard for Employers and Employees" ([Schoolfield, Va., Progress Print., 1924), 5, Rubenstein Library, https://find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE001721122.

[11] Wickersham, *Industrial Democracy at the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills*, 43.

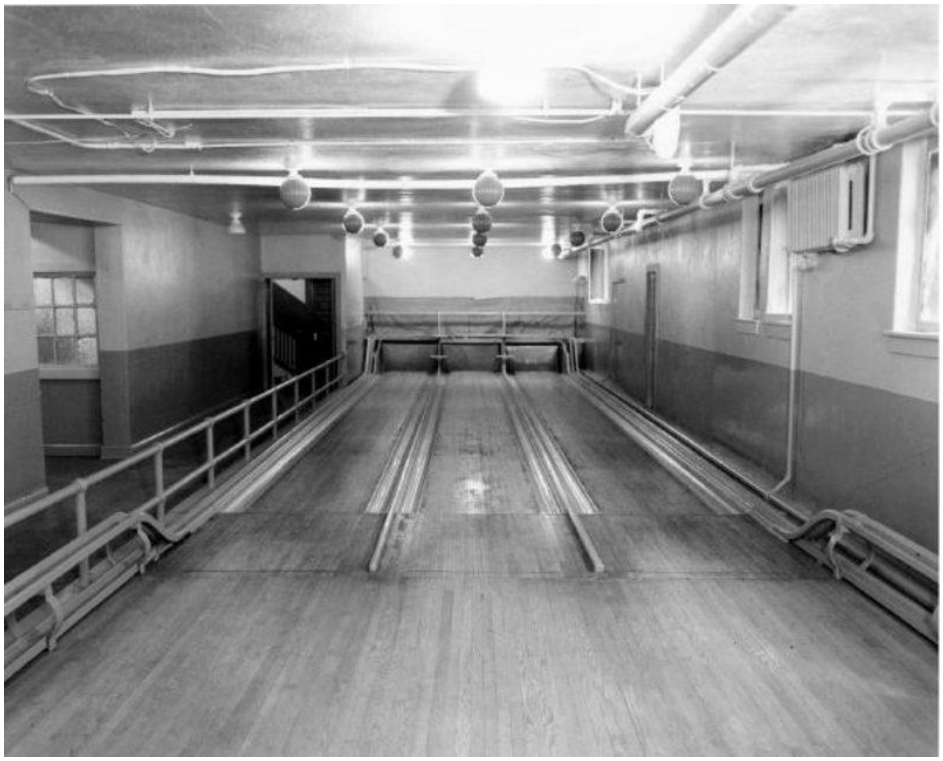

Figure 37. The YMCA offered wholesome recreation for men, such as this bowling alley in the basement of the building. Photo circa 2006 courtesy of Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

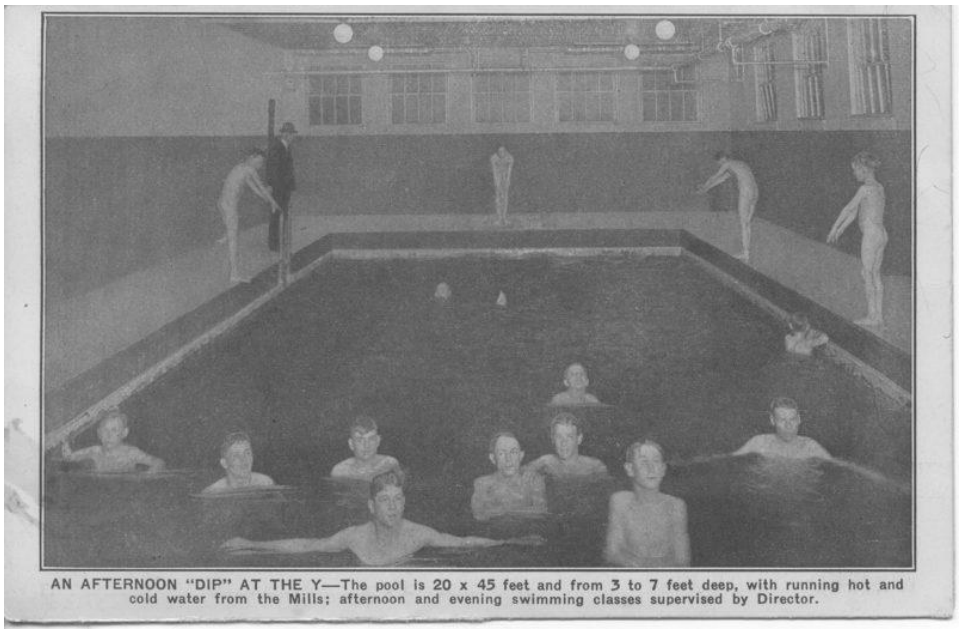

Figure 38. The swimming pool at the Schoolfield YMCA. Schoolfield Promotional Pamphlet, circa 1917 in author's possession.

Of course, this membership showing was fortified by management. Every Schoolfield boy was encouraged to sign up with his own YMCA membership starting at the age of ten, though the public school system also ritually brought younger boys to the YMCA for gym class or swimming at least once a week. Wickersham explained that for an hour each week, schoolboys would sit through a talk about "character building and social hygiene" followed by an athletic drill, then games, a bath, and a swim, all in the hour to unify workers of all levels through athletic fraternity.[12]

The YMCA's main purpose was to teach men and boys in industry "the truth" of the "finer" aspects of their masculinity through dedicated white, masculine spaces.[13] These finer and broader masculine aspects were chiefly productivity, encouraged through avoiding vices and excesses, and group loyalty. The wholesome physical, moral, and spiritual activities of the YMCA and the buildings' design attempted to rid men of their loafing tendencies making the YMCA a "real industrial asset" to the company in promise to deliver the rites of manhood to Schoolfield's industrial men.[14] The YMCA and its programs, Spessard and Fitzgerald hoped, would kindle an "inextinguishable flame" that would burn out "the dross" of "selfishness and imperfections," transforming a millhand "into a new creature" for work and community life in Schoolfield.[15]

Dan River's investment in white masculinity was overseen by Harry Spessard, who, when hired in 1916, led the YMCA's programs. Spessard was kept close to the activities of masculine training. Unlike his female counterpart in welfare, Hattie Hylton, who had to find housing either at the Day Nursery, Hylton Hall, or in Danville, Spessard was comfortably close to his place of work.

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[12] Lectures were common at the Schoolfield YMCA. These lectures often took on a Christian tone, as athletic programming rose in tandem with the "muscular Christianity movement," which was a British-born drive to develop "sound bodies through healthful outdoor exercise," as Gelber notes. Steven M. Gelber, "'Their Hands Are All Out Playing:' Business and Amateur Baseball, 1845-1917," *Journal of Sport History* 11, no. 1 (1984): 19.

[13] Fitzgerald, "The Commission upon the Responsibility of the Young Men's Christian Association," 2.

[14] Fitzgerald, "Written for 'Cotton' at the Request of Mr. Arnold," 4.

[15] Fitzgerald, "Rotary Speech: The True Ethical Standard for Employers and Employees," 9.

When he was hired in 1916 Dan River management built his home across the street from the YMCA so Spessard could quite easily oversee the social hub. Spessard's home was also notable for its distinctive style among the wooden cottages prevalent in Schoolfield. Built in the Craftsman style with Colonial Revival influences, Spessard's home was the only company housing in the village made of brick. Spessard's house was a large double-pile, three-bay house with Flemish-variant-bond brick exterior and detailing, setting it apart from the other wood-clad residences in Schoolfield. Topping off the house was an unusual roof, of moderate pitch with clipped gables and flared eaves, that may have once been covered in terra cotta tile. The home welcomed visitors with an elaborate entry with a flat-roofed front portico supported by triple square brick columns connected to each other by a solid brick wall with concrete coping, all built on a raised concrete porch deck. The front door was framed with eight-light sidelights, and an eight-light transom. In every detail, Spessard's house demonstrated a distinctive style of the 1910s underscoring Spessard's own distinction over all other Dan River staff who lived in the temporality of the village's standard wood clapboard homes.[16]

Figure 39. Spessard's house at 822 West Main Street, near the eastern boundary of Schoolfield, showcased the important position he held at the company and in the village. Author photo, 2020.

[16] This architectural description of Spessard's house was strengthened with the help of Mike Pulice, Architectural Historian at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources' Western Region Preservation Office.

Deemed a "good humanitarian" by those Schoolfielders who knew him, Harry Spessard was a critical leader of Dan River Mills' masculine welfare program.[17] Spessard was familiar with the ways of rural farmhands whom he oversaw since he was raised on a farm himself. Spessard was born in 1878 to David and Barbara Spessard on a farm near Chewsville, Maryland, a small rural northwestern town near Hagerstown. In 1903, Spessard married a fellow rural Marylander, Alice, and had three children, one of whom, Richard, would later work at Dan River Mills as an engineer. Spessard was himself well educated and obtained advanced degrees from Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Pennsylvania, where he returned to teach mathematics, Latin, and English and even serve as a principal between 1903 and 1913 of a secondary feeder school within the college.[18] Spessard's rural background combined with his education and administrative expertise no doubt made him an attractive candidate as the Dan River Mills welfare program expanded in the 1910s. Spessard's capable leadership eventually led him to oversee one of management's more popular investments: the Schoolfield baseball team.

[17] H.O. Hagood, interview by David E. Hoffman, August 22, 1984, Averett University Collections.

[18] Spessard, Harry. Year: 1910; Census Place: Annville, Lebanon, Pennsylvania; Roll: T624_1362; Page: 3B; Enumeration District: 0135; FHL microfilm: 1375375, Ancestry.com.; Lebanon Valley College, *Lebanon Valley College Catalog* (Annville, Pennsylvania: Lebanon Valley College, 1903; Internet Archive, 2011), 8, http://archive.org/details/lebanonvalley190304leba; Lebanon Valley College, *Lebanon Valley College Catalog* (Annville, Pennsylvania: Lebanon Valley College, 1909; Internet Archive, 2011), 5, http://archive.org/details/lebanonvalley190910leba; Lebanon Valley College, *Lebanon Valley College Catalog* (Annville, Pennsylvania: Lebanon Valley College, 1911; Internet Archive, 2011), 5, http://archive.org/details/lebanonvalley191112leba.

Figure 40. The Danville Fairgrounds, which featured a baseball field and wooden stands. Photo circa 1925, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Baseball was among the most popular sports offered among mill communities across the piedmont south. Elsewhere in the southern piedmont in the 1910s and 1920s, mill management sponsored mill teams, seeing baseball as a pastime that could condition millhands for regulated work at the mill. As the historians of *Like a Family* noted, management in North Carolinian mill towns saw baseball and other organized recreation as a tool to adjust "human nature to the demands of industrial labor" by teaching millhands obedience to authority, self-improvement, and "the necessity of maintaining self (and playmate) control."[19] Baseball and organized leisure more generally became a training tool for management, who aimed to entrench self-control and group loyalty as social values. In baseball, the team player learned that he was a "key part in the machinery of success" whose individual skill and self-control would be merged into a corporate body that was necessary to

[19] See Hall et al's discussion of the Southern Textile Bulletin's August 1916 article "Does the Playground Play?" Hall et al., *Like a Family*, 136–37.

uphold the "complex interdependence" of modern life.[20] The balance between individualism, which millhands knew and understood in the independence of their agricultural upbringing, would have to be balanced with corporate loyalty and obedience to the mill community.

While many historians have concluded that the national game of baseball rose in tandem with urban growth as a compensatory activity—one that would free workers from the confines of the manufacturing plant—other scholars have come to more nuanced conclusions that shed light on how the sport operated in southern mill villages like Schoolfield.[21] Scholar Steven Gelber took a cultural and anthropological approach to the national history of American baseball, arguing that rather than being a compensatory activity in reaction to industrialization, baseball flourished in tandem with urban growth. Baseball was popularized because the sport incorporated "work patterns and values" such as organization, efficiency, and cooperative activities into workers' leisure time.[22] Gelber emphasizes how baseball reflected cultural values and social behavior that embraced American cultural traits were needed in the working environment, rather than rejecting those traits or segregating them from work and home life.

Management invested in baseball as a way to deepen the characteristics that would help them realize a profit: group loyalty and self-control. Management had good reason to think of baseball as a powerful tool with which to train their male millhands. In other southern baseball cities like

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[20] Steven M. Gelber, "Working at Playing: The Culture of the Workplace and the Rise of Baseball," *Journal of Social History* 16, no. 4 (1983): 10.

[21] For studies highlighting the pastoral compensatory role that baseball had amidst the rise of capitalism and industrialization of America, see Robert H. Gudmestad, "Baseball, the Lost Cause, and the New South in Richmond, Virginia, 1883-1890," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 106, no. 3 (1998): 299; Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 16–19; Steven Reiss, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 7–9; Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870 - 1920*, Reprint, Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Modern History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); David Quentin Voigt, *American Baseball: From Gentleman's Sport to the Commissioner System* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983).

[22] Gelber, "'Their Hands Are All Out Playing," 5–6.

Richmond, Virginia, the sport was lauded as the "common plane upon which this democracy could meet, shake hands, and readjust the business difficulties of the city."[23] Baseball was also the perfect metaphor for maintaining self-control for greater economic success. A 1913 feature in the Richmond, Virginia paper, the *Times Dispatch*, argued control was central to becoming the quintessential Progressive era man. To impress readers with the virtues of control, the article used baseball as a metaphor. "The nation talks and thinks baseball," exclaimed the feature beneath a picture of a pitcher with his arm extended, releasing his pitch without relinquishing his determined, furrowed brow. "YOU are a baseball," it declared, "your brain is the pitcher" and life with its "few bases so quickly run, from babyhood to burial, is the ball field." Weak men, as that same Richmond feature argued, think that "others control me...heartless employers control me." But the Progressive era man knew that a man would have to control himself in order to succeed. He had to leave whiskey and "vice in every form" alone. The Progressive era man ideally had the strength to "control the HABIT of temptation." Like the determined pitcher, the man of the times had a steady grip on his problems. Through "practice, work, sobriety, good sleep, fresh air, careful, [and] virtuous living" he could reap the benefits of self-control and discipline: economic success.[24]

Recognizing the potential social and economic benefits baseball offered, around 1915 Schoolfield and Fitzgerald invested in constructing a simple wood frame baseball park just beyond Schoolfield limits. Inculcating masculinity was of equal value, though less costly to the mills than protecting female millhands' womanhood. Compared to the nearly $400,000 spent for women's recreation at Hylton Hall to protect and refine female workers' "high Christian ideals and character,"

[23] As quoted in Gudmestad, "Baseball, the Lost Cause, and the New South in Richmond, Virginia, 1883-1890," 292.

[24] "Control - The Secret of Life and Success," *The Times Dispatch*, September 14, 1913, Sunday Feature, 10, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress., https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85038615/1913-09-14/ed-1/seq-56/.

constructing a wood grandstand for a baseball field was pennies to the booming textile company.[25] Yet running a baseball program proved to be more costly than management had expected. The extensive program that began in 1920 with their creation of the Schoolfield Baseball Association and the start of the Bi-State League, a cooperative league of mill teams in Virginia and North Carolina, demanded an ever-increasing budget that management could not continue to justify.

Run out of the Schoolfield YMCA, the Schoolfield Baseball Association played locally and participated in the Bi-State League's first season in the spring of 1921, which Schoolfield's mill team handedly won.[26] The Bi-State League connected the nearby North Carolina mill towns of Reidsville, Thomasville, Burlington, and the textile trio of Leaksville-Spray-Draper as well as Schoolfield. All these towns were within easy travel distance by train, which was promoted to baseball tourists in the Bi-State League's season schedule booklets with the inclusion of railway timetables.[27] The Bi-State League was a quainter cousin in these respects to the National League. In 1876, railways had connected the cities that would make possible the organization of the National League. As cities in the northeast and Midwest like Chicago, Boston, New York and Detroit were joined together by the Michigan Central railroad decades before, so had the Norfolk Southern Railway helped connect small mill villages in the south in the twentieth century, making the spectator sport a possibility for working millhands who could travel to play in the Saturday afternoon games.[28]

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[25] Dan River Cotton Mills, "Hylton Hall: A Commodious and Attractive Home for Young Women."

[26] "Schoolfield First in the Bi-State League," *Daily News*, September 7, 1921, Box 34 clipping in Piedmont Baseball League Season schedule, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[27] "1921 Piedmont Baseball League Season Schedule," 1921, Box 34, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[28] John Rickards Betts, "The Technological Revolution and the Rise of Sport, 1850-1900," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 40, no. 2 (1953): 253, https://doi.org/10.2307/1888926.

Management hoped that baseball could encourage company and "village pride" through baseball.[29] Mill management preferred group harmony to occur through the "friendly and contagious enthusiasm" of baseball and readily gave part of the YMCA's budget to recruit and retain skilled ball players who moonlighted as millhands for the company.[30] The rest of the baseball budget came from the public through ticket sales, and through Schoolfield millhands themselves, who were expected to buy shares in the Schoolfield Baseball Association to help pay for team expenses.[31] The mill company's brief-lived newsletter *Progress* made annual calls for subscription pledges to "represent the public spirit of the citizens of our town."[32] Robust Schoolfield subscription pledges could showcase how Dan River millhands were not the backwards laborers under complete control of the mills, but engaged in, and self-supporting of, their community and even their leisure. However, while equipment and some other related expenses were supposed to be purchased with funds from game-day profits and subscription funds, in fact often than not, the equipment lists and bills were sent directly to C.D. Gaver, the mill's secretary, to pay rather than paid by the Baseball Association.[33]

Though based on a subscription program, baseball in Schoolfield demanded an increasingly larger budget to fund the well-paid welfare staff who managed the team. Management ended up doling out much of the funds to support the program. Not only did Harry Spessard get paid for overseeing the program, but so did the managers he hired to handle the team. In 1921 Spessard

[29] Herring, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages*, 137.

[30] Herring, 141.

[31] "Membership Certificate #703 for the Schoolfield Base Ball Association," June 22, 1920, Box 34, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[32] "Baseball Commissioners Ready for the Big Start," *The Progress*, March 11, 1921, 1, Box 34, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[33] G.C. Sutter to C.D. Gaver, April 6, 1921, Box 34, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

hired Frank Graham, a popular weaver at the mills, in a paid position as the baseball manager.[34] Spessard and Graham's combined management of the baseball program at Schoolfield aimed to ensure workers' enthusiasm and corporate pride.

MEMBERSHIP NOT TRANSFERABLE

NUMBER 703

MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE

SHARES One

The Schoolfield Base Ball Association

(UNINCORPORATED)

OF SCHOOLFIELD, VIRGINIA

THIS CERTIFIES that C. E. Clark the holder hereof, is a registered member of The Schoolfield Base Ball Association, a voluntary organization, with headquarters at the Y. M. C. A. Building, Schoolfield, Virginia, for the promotion of Base Ball and other Athletic Sports.

This Certificate is given the above-named party as evidence of having subscribed and paid for the number of shares herein shown, at the rate of Five Dollars per Share, to the support of said Association, and is hereby entitled to all of the rights of membership in said Association and the privileges thereof to be determined by the members.

SCHOOLFIELD BASE BALL ASSOCIATION.

Signature of Owner

Date Issued June 22 1920

Figure 41. A membership certificate for the Schoolfield Base Ball Association in its first year. Similar to a corporate finance scheme, members purchased shares to support the association. "Membership Certificate #703 for the Schoolfield Base Ball Association," June 22, 1920. Box 34. Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Frank Graham was a costly hire, though his position was typical in southern mill villages where executives hired baseball players to boost their team's overall athletic power and secure team pride through game wins. Graham's contract made clear that although he would be managing the team for $85.00 a week, "during that time he is not actually playing baseball or engaged in necessary duties of manager" Graham was required to follow his usual role as a weaver in Mill Number Four at Dan River. Graham's baseball salary was double the highest offered at the mill for millhands,

[34] Malcolm K. Harris, "Contract between Baseball Commission of the Schoolfield YMCA and Frank Graham," March 12, 1921, Box 34, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

which hovered around $30.80 a week among the highest paid positions of loom fixer.[35] According to his baseball contract, Graham's salary's high mark demonstrated the worth of his "full charge and responsibility of the [baseball] club" to ensure Schoolfield fans "real baseball."[36] Graham did not disappoint. In the first year of the program, the team won the Bi-State League pennant and in years following, Schoolfield was often victorious against other local teams, beating their rivals at the Riverside Division or the Danville Greys—another Confederate reference that would not be lost to an audience in the "Last Capitol of the Confederacy."[37] Graham's management of the team helped engender a fierce loyalty to Schoolfield and the mill.

In the first years of baseball at Schoolfield, the unifying power of the sport seemed to be working. After interviewing loom fixers at Dan River, for instance, the undergraduate political science major Raymond Wickersham reported that these workers attributed less labor turnover to the YMCA's athletic programming. The mill community had experienced more "harmony," and even "more and better production" in the first five years of organized recreation like the Schoolfield Baseball Association. These activities, Wickersham concluded, created greater satisfaction among the employees of Schoolfield by making them feel "a personal interest" in the company.[38]

Through baseball, mill management attempted to ensure that millhands' leisure was not spent in aimless pursuits but was focused on organized recreation that emphasized masculine virtues of individual efficiency, control, and productivity that could benefit the corporate good. In some instances, baseball in Schoolfield served as a mechanism for community pride but its finances did not exactly support company profits. With money spent on managing the ball field, players, and

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[35] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 167.

[36] "Baseball Commissioners Ready for the Big Start," 1.

[37] "Club's Standings," *The Bee*, June 15, 1925, 7, Newspapers.com.; "Schoolfield Wins, Riverside Loses," *The Bee*, August 25, 1924, 19, Newspapers.com.

[38] Wickersham, *Industrial Democracy at the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills*, 43.

even hiring a manager for the time, the company invested heavily in what they saw as another mechanism for training male workers in company work. While management encouraged athletic participation to ensure fidelity and obedience to the company, the economic return on this baseball investment was still a murky outcome that management could hardly control enough for it to come to fruition. By 1926, all mention of Schoolfield's baseball program vanished from the local paper the *Bee*. The dwindling return on management's investment in baseball led management to give up on their sponsorship of the mill team. However, management did not give up on similar investments in white masculinity, especially when it came to their program of Industrial Democracy.

Industrial Democracy and the Contradictions of 'Man to Man' Philosophy

The brainchild of the social philosopher and entrepreneur John Leitch, Industrial Democracy was a national program that encouraged cooperative governance systems between workers and management at industrial corporations in the 1910s and 1920s. A frequent correspondent and friend to Dan River president Harry Fitzgerald, Leitch sketched out his basic ideology for the system of cooperative industrial governance in *Man to Man: The Story of Industrial Democracy* (1919). As Leitch made clear in his conclusion to *Man to Man*, Industrial Democracy was meant to affect this value as "an Americanizing force" that restored "a personal and intimate touch between the leader and his men."[39]

Industries across the country including Dan River turned to Industrial Democracy as a way to "win over the opposition" of outside labor unions.[40] One study of Industrial Democracy-type company unions cited at least forty-two welfare programs that were closely related to Fitzgerald's

[39] Leitch, *Man to Man: The Story of Industrial Democracy*, 229; H. R. Fitzgerald to John Leitch, November 3, 1920, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[40] John Leitch to H. R. Fitzgerald, Letter, October 8, 1925, Box 12, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

scheme at Dan River.[41] These national programs based on similar principles were created as World War I had reinvigorated calls for "Americanizing" programs led by business.[42]

Implemented at Dan River Mills by Harry Fitzgerald from 1919 until 1930, Industrial Democracy was Fitzgerald's most comprehensive attempt to unify white workers and management through notions of white American masculinity that prized corporate fidelity over individual good. Similar to other programs across the nation, Dan River's Industrial Democracy program mimicked the American democratic system with a "congress" made up of a house of mill worker representatives elected annually by their peers, a senate of department overseers, and an executive branch of management. The congress organized committees on everything from payroll to village amusements, which ostensibly allowed small groups of workers and supervisors to "have a voice in all matters pertaining to their welfare."[43] The congress met to discuss legislation at regular sessions held in the Schoolfield YMCA auditorium. Within the YMCA, a landmark of masculine welfare, this representative scheme was the professed guarantor of industrial and social peace. Workers elected to the house could work together on committees, propose legislation—usually about working conditions—and, in so doing, ideally find common ground with management by working collectively to draft and present bills to executive staff.[44] Through this representation, Industrial Democracy promised a new era of industrial relations; one that eliminated the power imbalance and gave workers and management a chance to move the company forward "man to man."[45]

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[41] In his thesis, King lists forty-two American companies that had "Leitch-type" business cultural systems by 1922. King, "A Cultural Innovation That Failed," 389.

[42] "Miss Hattie Hylton, Welfare Superintendent: Paternalism in the Cotton Mills," 12.

[43] Address of H.R. Fitzgerald to the Southern Textile Association, printed p 8-11 in the Southern Textile Bulletin, vol. 18 as transcribed fully in King, "A Cultural Innovation That Failed," 367.

[44] "Industrial Democracy Constitution and By-Laws," July 2, 1919, box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[45] While many social and political commentators used this hopeful phrase with regards to ideal labor relations, it was coined first by political theorist John Leitch. John Leitch, *Man to Man: The Story of Industrial Democracy* (New York: B.C. Forbes Company, 1919; Internet Archive,2007), https://archive.org/details/mantomanstoryofi00leituoft.

Despite his promotion of this equal bargaining power, Fitzgerald had workers who were engaged in Industrial Democracy, either as mere voters or representatives, sign a pledge saying they would abide by certain tenets. When Industrial Democracy was implemented in 1919, Fitzgerald had his nearly 4,000 workers sign pledge cards. On one side, the cards outlined Dan River's adaptation of Leitch's *Man to Man* principles, which held service as the ultimate industrial virtue:

> I hereby subscribe to and heartily endorse the Policy of our Company as printed on the back of this card. I pledge myself to observe and be governed by its principles of Justice, Co-operation, Economy, Energy, and Service. I also agree with my fellow-associates of the Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, that by the help of God, I will do all in my power to aid in carrying out this Policy and to achieve the distinguished success which I believe is within the reach of our great organization.[46]

Once the worker signed his name and put his street address beneath this pledge, the reverse side gave a more detailed explanation of what exactly "Justice, Co-operation, Economy, Energy, and Service" meant. Fitzgerald preached to his workers in his first address to the company congress, instructing workers to "study carefully" the five principles and encouraging them to "read them over and over again until...you know that they are in your heart."[47]This loyalty card with its mixture of moral and economic values encouraged each worker to marry his productive success with that of the company. In keeping with *Man to Man,* Leitch repeatedly connected the moral with the economic, concluding that "we [capitalists] cannot breed a national spirit without national prosperity; the one begets the other."[48] This was not just a company loyalty pledge card the workers were signing, but also one that, once signed, would supposedly fulfill a moral spirit in workers and the nation.

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[46] "Industrial Democracy Pledge Card" (Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills, 1930 1919), Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[47] H.R. Fitzgerald, "H.R. Fitzgerald Address to Industrial Democracy Congress," July 9, 1919, 2, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[48] Leitch, *Man to Man: The Story of Industrial Democracy*, 225.

Fitzgerald used Industrial Democracy to yoke the workers' individual good with the company's profitability, despite the fact that two could not always go hand in hand. In July of 1921, Harry Fitzgerald warned Industrial Democracy's third congress that had gathered in Schoolfield's YMCA auditorium to hear his annual address. For this Industrial Democracy to work, Fitzgerald argued, each loyal worker must do his part. Newcomers to the company, Fitzgerald urged, must be taught to love and value the chief principles of justice, co-operation, economy, energy, and service and "must likewise take note of any who are disloyal" to those values.[49] Dan River Mill workers had to abide by the principles of Industrial Democracy, Fitzgerald argued, because "the spirit of cooperation" would have "scientific value" that affected the mill's profitability.[50] Fitzgerald expressed a common connection that other mills had made between community, work, and capital. Industrial Democracy had its humanitarian benefits such as supporting community cohesion, but the system was also promoted as a "business proposition" in which dollars invested in social programs yielded "handsome returns."[51] If workers were disloyal, or could not share these same values, Fitzgerald implied, the moral paucity would translate directly to monetary poverty for the mills and its employees.

Collective harmony and economic productivity were the chief public motivations of Industrial Democracy. In 1920, for instance, the trade journal *The Textile World* published an extensive article on Dan River's implementation of Industrial Democracy. The article declared that "Democracy is the Expression of the Mill Spirit," and highlighted Dan River's brand of Leitch's Industrial Democracy as "merely another step in the progress of the Danville Plant." In the article,

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[49] H. R. Fitzgerald, "H.R. Fitzgerald Address to Industrial Democracy Congress," July 14, 1921, 6, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[50] Fitzgerald, 6.

[51] David Clark, ed., "Health and Happiness Number," *Southern Textile Bulletin* XVIII, no. 17 (December 25, 1919), Internet Archive, 2013, 5, https://archive.org/details/southerntextileb1919unse.

Fitzgerald made clear that Industrial Democracy was the answer to an "old" industrial order where "each man sought his own selfish ends." With Industrial Democracy, Fitzgerald monetized company loyalty to pressure workers to enfold their individual interest with the corporate good. To Fitzgerald, Industrial Democracy's greatest value was its service to the mill's efficiency. Efficiency was not just a measure of productivity, it also was a measure of the entire mill system in "social harmony," as Haber has discussed in *Efficiency and Uplift*.[52] As a man of the Progressive era, Fitzgerald defined efficiency as the ultimate social harmony that occurred when the mill workers collectively adhered to his competent leadership. Fitzgerald echoed Leitch's emphasis on Industrial Democracy as a modern, scientific structure, highlighting the system's ability to enfold individual moral progress—through commitment to the five principles—into collective profitability. Fitzgerald opined in the article that Industrial Democracy ultimately recognized the equality of management and workers. "We are all workers—that's all," he concluded, obscuring his real power at the mill and encouraging unity among company management, workers, and staff.[53]

The "we" in Fitzgerald's *Textile World* declaration was limited to white workers at the mill. Not only was there explicit exclusion of Black workers from certain positions at the mill, but one of the first legislative acts of the Dan River's congress under Industrial Democracy was to enact a segregation law in November of 1919, just months after Industrial Democracy had begun in July. The House bill declared that no Black workers "of either sex or of any age" be employed at the mill other than as "sweepers or scourers, or floor cleaners, or janitors...drivers, truckers" and in other labor-intensive departments like the bleachery and boiler house. The bill also insisted that "no colored people can use the same room for dressing or toilet that is used by white people," solidifying

[52] Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era 1890-1920* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1964), x.

[53] "Democracy Is the Expression of Mill Spirit," *Textile World*, February 7, 1920.

the mill's commitment to Jim Crow practices that were practiced throughout the south.[54] Industrial Democracy operated on a system of white loyalty that had been lauded by management at Dan River since its nineteenth century inception.

While it might have girded collective action against any smatter of Black integration, Industrial Democracy was dismally incompetent as a guard against splintering worker loyalty. Even at the moment of Industrial Democracy's conception, many Dan River workers were forming outside unions. In 1919, the same year Industrial Democracy was implemented, Dan River Mills loom fixers formed the Schoolfield-Danville Loom Fixers Local 199. Dan River management reacted later that year by creating Industrial Democracy, with meetings held at one of the most beloved and grand community buildings in the village, the YMCA. Workers involved with Industrial Democracy sat in a dedicated auditorium to raise issues about pay, hours, and working conditions. With a sanctuary to the cause and values of Industrial Democracy, management attempted to demonstrate the value of the company union over outside unions, wooing workers to fidelity to Dan River.

Management's message was somewhat effective considering that members of the Loom Fixers Union were constrained by budget and did not have the power to mold the built environment to their needs. The Loom Fixers Union held meetings in a shared social hall in downtown Danville, Dansylvania Hall. Meeting in Dansylvania Hall had its own problems. In at least one instance, members reported being relegated to sitting on potato sacks and box crates at a nearby commissary because other groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, which also met at Dansylvania Hall, had pushed out the local union's regular meeting.[55] Brushed aside and cramped by the availability of meeting

[54] W.A. Young and Geo Blanks, "House Bill No. 45 Relative to Colored Help," November 25, 1919, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[55] Harriet L Herring, "Labor Troubles in the Danville Area, 1930: Personal Observations of HLH," 1930, 10, Folder 186, Harriet L. Herring Papers, 1925-1968 #4017, SHC.

space in downtown Danville, the local union could not match the corporate power of Dan River to demonstrate the dignity and honor of collective action.

Yet the threat the Loom Fixers Union posed to so-called workplace harmony caused management to undergird its program of Industrial Democracy not just with the architectural wonders of the YMCA, but through the company sponsored publication *Progress*. The *Progress* was a magazine published bi-weekly and printed by the company at offices within the YMCA. The company-sponsored periodical began in December of 1919 and was sold to the public, much to the *Danville Register* and *Danville Bee's* dismay, by subscription for $1.50 a year.[56] The *Progress's* professed purpose was as a regular digest of "Progress and Human Interest, Social and Industrial Welfare" written "By and For the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mill Folk." With Harry Spessard's oversight, the *Progress* boasted professional editors hired by management. At first *Progress* was run by a Virginian publisher, A. Bledsoe Clement ran the paper briefly, but after a number of dramatic guffaws from Clement, the mills hired a journalist to lead up the paper, W.M. Hundley in its final year.[57] The magazine ran fairly consistently through 1924 until pressure from local newspaper owner and mill stockholder Rorer Abraham James Jr. and company financial woes took their toll on its continued publication.

The few remaining clippings and occasional full issues showcase the magazine as yet another instrument for management's vision of a loyal, orderly, and Anglo-Saxon labor force. Articles in one December 1921 issue ran the gamut of anti-labor articles to personal hygiene columns. The issue included a front piece editorial decrying the labor activist Emma Goldman's "hatred of this country." Later pages of the issue went into more personal topics and included a self-help article on "looking pleasant," imploring workers to smile and be tidy in their appearance. Another article titled

[56] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 273.

[57] Smith, 273–75.

"Sensitiveness—and the cure for it," advised men to avoid too much reading since books would inevitably "arouse morbid thoughts."[58] These editorials and articles spoke to the men of the village with themes that centered on critiquing behavior and boosting the importance of amicability and self-control.

In this same December issue was an article titled "Messages for Men: Every Hair is Numbered" on the "Men's Page" towards the back of the publication. Along with the motion picture schedule for the Y was a column offering advice for mill men on how to stay optimistic despite defeat and insurmountable odds, offering reminders of heroes who, too, even in the face of defeat had more value than "many sparrows."[59] The article aimed to tell workers that they must be satisfied with non-monetary social goods offered by management and to accept monetary defeat on the payroll. The "Y staff" authors centered their parable on Confederate General Robert E. Lee as a model of a "hero" whose personality through "noble effort" meant he was never really "outclassed as a general" although "the cause has been lost." Noting that Lee "lost by necessity and in the divine order of events," the *Progress* authors wrote that Lee still lived through his heroic legacy, despite his life projects—such as maintaining slavery in the rebellious states of the Confederacy—failing. Lee's story was a reminder to millhands that "circumstances may be against a man, but if he is not against himself, he is not a failure." These authors reminded readers that "whether weaver, fixer, overseer, salesman, mechanic, scrubber, or president or 'Y' man, we do not know what next month or next year may bring forth" but that the optimist, like Lee, knew that "no noble effort is ever lost." The article implored its male readers to maintain optimism in even in the view of economic hardship, to

[58] A. Bledsoe Clement, ed., "The Progress," *The Progress* II, no. 47 (December 16, 1921): 1,3,5,8.

[59] The article's reference is a biblical one. Matthew 10:30 discusses the worth and value of the spirit over the material world: "And fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

keep up productivity even as pay was slashed, equating these efforts with noble effort akin to those of Robert E. Lee. The article addressed millhands' feelings of failure or suffering unjustly at the hands of a higher power and braced them for future disappointments by linking optimism with the claimed heroism of the Confederacy.

The editorial staff at the *Progress* had a difficult time upholding their own standards of masculinity that accepted defeat with honor in service to a greater authority. The editor, A.B. Clement, especially had a difficult time upholding these standards. In 1923, Harry Spessard, who oversaw the magazine's publication, complained to president Harry Fitzgerald about Clement. In the four years of his employment, Spessard claimed Clement had been indiscreet with his stenographer whom he had taken "home practically every night," had "loafed a great deal," and had even tried to publish in *Progress* a "socialist" article by the then-mayor of New York, John Francis Hyland, which decried the wide gap between "wealth lords" and workers.[60] When Spessard had another staff member try to speak to Clement "in a brotherly way" about his various sexual indiscretions and socialist leanings, the problems with Clement did not resolve. A few weeks after relating these complaints to Fitzgerald, Spessard went directly to the *Progress* offices at the YMCA to speak with Clement man to man. As he reported to Fitzgerald later, Spessard suggested that Clement let go of his present stenographer and have a glass put in his office door, no doubt to make sexual shenanigans difficult.[61] In response to these recommendations, Clement accused Spessard of "not treating him "white" and the next thing Spessard knew, a "light blow had landed on my temple." Spessard's criticism of Clement had undermined Clement's ideas of his own white masculinity, resulting in a tussle that made the local papers when Clement swiftly resigned to save face.[62]

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[60] H.E. Spessard to H. R. Fitzgerald, March 5, 1923, Box 7, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[61] H.E. Spessard to H. R. Fitzgerald, March 28, 1923, 1, Box 7, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[62] "A.B. Clement, of Progress, Hits Mr. H.E. Spessard."

Clement's sexual impropriety, socialist leanings, and willingness to strike back against authority, made him an unsuitable match for Industrial Democracy and management's definition of masculinity. For higher level staffers like Spessard and president Fitzgerald, the strength and self-reliance expected from men was valued as long as these men did not threaten the authority or undermine the control of company management.

Value and Profit in the 'Happy Relationship' of Employer and Employee

With the system of Industrial Democracy, Fitzgerald could offer the façade of worker cooperation with management, engendering good will and worker loyalty through orderly meetings, pleasant house chambers in the YMCA, and a periodical dedicated to Industrial Democracy's principles. However, beneath this façade, Fitzgerald frequently leveraged workers' good will to enact changes against workers' best interests. Harry Fitzgerald professed to believe in Industrial Democracy's central premise that the future success of America was "bound up in the establishment of a happy relationship between the employer and the employee."[63] When the economic outlook was good in the textile market, this so-called happy relationship, a balance of company loyalty and profit, could operate harmoniously. Yet, when the company's profits diminished, Fitzgerald used the front of a democratic process to implement top-down changes in areas such as wages, hours, and welfare—the same subjects that worker representatives were supposed to oversee in their various committees.

The tension of democratic versus autocratic, social good versus economic profit, was embodied in the tension between workers' wages and the Economy Dividend, frequent issues that the House discussed throughout the program of Industrial Democracy. Fitzgerald attempted to value company loyalty by monetizing it through a system of wage bonuses that he called "Economy Dividend." In his scheme of Industrial Democracy, Fitzgerald devised an equation that would

[63] Introduction in Leitch, *Man to Man: The Story of Industrial Democracy*.

calculate how much had been saved by the company through Industrial Democracy, which purportedly raised morale and productivity by diminishing common delinquency among its workers. As Fitzgerald reasoned, workers who shared power through the Industrial Democracy scheme would have better morale, and would show up to work, work diligently, and pledge their loyalty to the mill that rewarded their efforts. Money that was supposedly saved through diminishing absenteeism or shirking—spending longer on breaks than was allowed, coming in late or otherwise stretching one's paid time—was then split 50-50 between management and workers, who received this payment separately from their regular weekly wages.

The dividend, although cash, was calculated by a formula "lacking in precision," according to one business historian's later analysis. Straining to make the social value equate to an economic one, Fitzgerald's equation for determining Economy Dividends included general estimates of potential delinquencies and absenteeism, resulting in an arbitrary payout amount to workers that fluctuated regularly.[64] For example, in 1922, Fitzgerald praised workers for their efficiency and the resulting Economy Dividends totaling over $1,240,000.[65] Yet the following year, Fitzgerald had to reassure his workers that "notwithstanding the many difficulties affecting the operation of the plant" that the diminished Economy Dividends of $702,975.25 was still a "magnificent sum."[66] The amount—whatever it was—however, was an important gesture for Fitzgerald to his workers. To Fitzgerald, the Economy Dividend was necessary for retaining a loyal workforce. Even when Dan River began facing serious profit losses in 1924, Fitzgerald cut worker's pay by ten percent before he halted the Economy Dividend payments, much to workers' chagrin.[67]

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[64] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 285.

[65] H. R. Fitzgerald, "H.R. Fitzgerald Address to Industrial Democracy Congress," August 8, 1922, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[66] Fitzgerald, "H.R. Fitzgerald Address to Industrial Democracy Congress," August 9, 1923.

[67] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 284–89.

Despite this Economy Dividend and Fitzgerald's continued pronouncements about workers' having control over their own welfare, Fitzgerald repeatedly struck down any bill that remotely concerned wage increases. Workers' wages were often up for discussion in bills presented on the House floor that requested pay raises or bonuses. With some maneuvering on the part of management, Fitzgerald often declared these bills as "unconstitutional," and would be swiftly rescinded by workers who knew that to go against management was to go against their best hope for keeping their jobs.[68] In one instance early in Industrial Democracy, Fitzgerald brought to the House a recommendation for wage cuts. The House considered Fitzgerald's recommendation through a committee and eventually accepted the cut as Fitzgerald suggested. Fitzgerald quickly reported the smooth and amicable process to John Leitch later. "It would've done your heart good," Fitzgerald wrote to Leitch, "to have seen the fine spirit…displayed by the members of the House" who had worked "unselfishly to promote the interest of the organization and do what they felt was the wise thing for all of their constituents."[69] Fitzgerald was proud to have found a system in which top-down demands could hide beneath the cloak of compromise, harmony, and cooperation. In the early years of Industrial Democracy, Fitzgerald felt confident he could continue to cultivate workers' good will and loyalty.

Despite Fitzgerald's confidence in the system of Industrial Democracy, workers' confidence in the system waned as the mechanism for worker representation proved to be anything but. Under economic pressure in 1921, 1924 and with the stock market crash of 1929, the show of white masculinity through Industrial Democracy could no longer appease workers into an enduring

[68] Henry McDaniel, "House Bill No. 27: 4% on Each Dollar Made during 1921," November 17, 1921, 27, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC; C.D. Gaver to H. R. Fitzgerald, April 28, 1921, Box 3, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC; C.M. Whisenant et al., "House Bill No. 17 General Increase in Wages of 20%," November 9, 1922, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[69] H. R. Fitzgerald to John Leitch, November 27, 1920, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

company loyalty. The paternalistic hierarchy that Fitzgerald had hidden with a democratic, progressive sheen was revealed as workers demanded wages that were at odds with the company's profit goals.

The first seeds of conflict were planted at the moment of Industrial Democracy itself. In 1919, loom fixers at Dan River's Riverside Division formed the Schoolfield-Danville Loom Fixers Local 199 union at the same time as Fitzgerald sought to combat its influence with Industrial Democracy, implemented that same year.[70] Though the union had well under one hundred members out of an employee base of 4,000, its committees made frequent demands of Fitzgerald for higher pay throughout the 1920s.[71] In an undated letter, a few members of the Loom Fixers Association appealed to Fitzgerald through his own terms in their request for higher wages. "We want to cooperate with you in prosperity towards the Company," they said, but under the current pay, they felt that though they were cooperative, they were "not being cooperated with" by the company. Though the loom fixers argued they were productive and had "manhood enough in us to shoulder our load like a man," ultimately "the present price we are working for is not paying our expenses." In order to be "reasonable, honest gentlemen" and to give "our family justice" the loom fixers requested a raise of sixty cents an hour. With this raise, "the men will take interest in their work and make your business our business."[72] Having no doubt heard Fitzgerald's speeches on Industrial Democracy, efficiency, and loyalty, these men, too, began to value their masculinity, and thought it should be made material in real wages.

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[70] Tom Tippett, *When Southern Labor Stirs* (New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, 1931), 216.

[71] Tippett, 216.

[72] Schoolfield-Danville Loom Fixers, Local 199 to H. R. Fitzgerald, July 6, 1925, Box 32, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

The loom fixers union was not the only group Fitzgerald reprimanded for making requests of the company to better their economic situation. The workers' congress, the House in the scheme of Industrial Democracy, also made requests for higher pay through bills that committees wrote and brought forward for a collective vote on the house floor. These were often cast aside by Fitzgerald. In November of 1921, a committee led by a weaver at Dan River wrote a bill that requested that employees of the company get four percent return for every dollar of profit made that year. Not only would the payment be "a great help" to the workers, but the committee argued, it would also be "a nice Christmas gift." In a handwritten note at the bottom of the typed bill submitted for his review, Fitzgerald reproached the writers. "This bill is unconstitutional," Fitzgerald declared and again expressed his disdain for the wage request. In Industrial Democracy, Fitzgerald lectured, the worker "does not ask to be given anything except what we earn" and the Economy Dividend—determined by the company— was the measuring of profit, not real wages. "It is hard to understand how anyone could fail to appreciate [that they] have received the "Lion's Share" of [what] has been earned," a disgruntled Fitzgerald concluded.[73] There is no record of this bill passing.

Tensions over wages rose again in 1924, when the company reported its first profit loss of $493,832.47, or nearly $7.5 million in 2020 dollars.[74] That was a huge blow to a company whose average annual net profit had previously fallen between $2.3 million and $4.1 million in the previous five years, about $34.5 million to $63.3 million if adjusted in present day dollars.[75] Though textile

[73] Original emphasis. McDaniel, "House Bill No. 27," 1–2.

[74] "Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc. Annual Report," 1924, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[75] "Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc. Annual Report," 1919, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; "Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc. Annual Report," 1920, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; "Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc. Annual Report," 1921, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; "Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc. Annual Report," 1922, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; "Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc. Annual Report," 1923, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

markets slumped in 1924, Fitzgerald slashed workers' pay while refusing to eliminate unnecessary welfare accoutrement such as the Economy Dividend or the baseball team. Fitzgerald also refused to cut his own salary. Throughout his tenure, Fitzgerald made around $70,000 annually.[76] In contrast, payroll for the company, including overseerers, supervisors, loom fixers, and other lower positions averaged out to eighteen dollars a week, or about $936 a year.[77] Instead of using his annual address to the Industrial Democracy Congress that year to boost worker morale amidst depressed wages, Fitzgerald admonished his workers. Fitzgerald told them that it would be "entirely out of order for either of your honorable bodies to entertain any bill or resolution that would make any increase in your present cost," shutting down the possibility of requests or future House bills calling for higher wages.[78] However, Fitzgerald had no issue forcing a pay cut by demanding that the House and Senate pass a ten percent decrease in wages, in addition to cutting workers hours in half.[79] To Fitzgerald, the Economy Dividend still had power to persuade workers "with the right spirit" towards productivity, and thus only workers' wages needed to be reduced.[80]

Fitzgerald's own mentor and board chair, Ad Schoolfield, advised Fitzgerald to handle the situation differently. Schoolfield wrote to Fitzgerald that "if the operatives' wages are reduced, ours should be too."[81] Schoolfield appealed to Fitzgerald that the company had "enabled so many thousands of people to make a livelihood and prosper" but could not continue unless Fitzgerald

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[76] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 283; Meade, *I Live in Virginia*, 10.

[77] H. R. Fitzgerald, "H.R. Fitzgerald Address to Industrial Democracy Congress," August 13, 1925, 2–3, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[78] Fitzgerald, 5.

[79] H. R. Fitzgerald, "Co-Operation Needed in Industrial Leadership," *Textile World* 67 (February 7, 1925): 158; Fitzgerald, "H.R. Fitzgerald Address to Industrial Democracy Congress," August 13, 1925, 2.

[80] Fitzgerald, "H.R. Fitzgerald Address to Industrial Democracy Congress," August 13, 1925, 5.

[81] Schoolfield to Fitzgerald, as quoted in King, "A Cultural Innovation That Failed," 93; "Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc. Annual Report," 1929, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

conducted the company "on sane and businesslike principles" rather than by his dogmatic social agenda of Industrial Democracy.[82] Fitzgerald resisted Schoolfield's advice. Fitzgerald remained stubbornly committed to his perceived reality that under his sole counsel, he could ensure his male white millhands working in corporate harmony through democratic means. Obstinate, Fitzgerald ignored that fact that by lowering wages he was devaluing the masculinity he was so committed to and undermining the control he desperately sought over workers and the company.

Fitzgerald's refusal to follow Schoolfield's counsel was just one fissure of many developing in their relationship. Rather than heed Schoolfield's advice to curtail lavish welfare expenses and executive salaries, Fitzgerald took Schoolfield's concern as an affront to his managerial style that Fitzgerald believed had encouraged morale in Dan River workers.[83] Fitzgerald began to think Schoolfield was attempting to undermine him. To retaliate, Fitzgerald revoked his own loyalty to Schoolfield and, in 1926, maneuvered to have the 1918 company by-laws changed in such a way that would siphon off power from Schoolfield's position as board chairman.

With Fitzgerald's rise to the presidency in the 1918 new company by-laws allowed Fitzgerald's predecessor Schoolfield to step away from day-to-day management of the mills. Schoolfield still maintained role of "executive head of the Company" however, with "a general supervision of all of its affairs." The president, on the other hand, was responsible for the "active management" of the company's business "in connection with and under the supervision of the Chairman of the Board."[84] Sharing power in management of the mill, these men were also close

[82] Schoolfield to Fitzgerald, October 1924 as quoted in King, "A Cultural Innovation That Failed," 105.

[83] King, 103–6.

[84] "By-Laws of the Stockholders of the Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills," 1918, 7,8, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

family friends.[85] Fitzgerald's father, Thomas Benton Fitzgerald and Schoolfield had, after all, been the founders of the company. However, Harry Fitzgerald and Ad Schoolfield had different ideas of what it meant to run a company. Schoolfield's vision for the company was modest. Schoolfield believed that it was in the mill's economic interest to "plan for housing and tak[e] care of…operatives in a comfortable way," but warned against imprudent progressive policies and lavish construction spending.[86] Fitzgerald saw the company's role as more of a humanitarian benefactor rather than a business. He saw himself especially as a benevolent civic leader, creating a well-functioning white society for the greater good of the white south and white America.

Even with these different visions, dual leadership of the company worked well in flush markets. However, under financial pressure, the relationship suffered. As Schoolfield began demanding that Fitzgerald make cuts in welfare and executive salaries as profits sunk beginning in 1924, Fitzgerald became exasperated, telling Schoolfield that he had given the company "every ounce of strength that my nerves would stand" supporting Schoolfield's policies and was "distressed" that Schoolfield would now withdraw his support for Fitzgerald when it came to Fitzgerald's management.[87] In 1926, Fitzgerald convinced the board to approve, unanimously and without Schoolfield present, the transfer of executive power from the chairman of the board to the president. As chairman of the board, Schoolfield was relegated to an advisory role only.[88] This change unshackled Fitzgerald from Schoolfield's oversight but was not the victory for which

[85] Robert Smith Robert King both delve into this correspondence with far more depth than this modest dissertation will allow. Smith, *Mill on the Dan*; King, "A Cultural Innovation That Failed"; King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*.

[86] R. A. Schoolfield to H. R. Fitzgerald, March 15, 1920, 2, Box 2, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[87] Fitzgerald to Schoolfield, September 28, 1926 as quoted in King, "A Cultural Innovation That Failed," 110.

[88] King, 114.

Fitzgerald had hoped. Fitzgerald's maneuvering with these new by-laws severed a bond that the mill president would desperately need in the years ahead.

Conclusion

Under Fitzgerald, Dan River Mills invested heavily in the appearance of democracy and unified white masculinity. Prosperity fueled this farce easily by masking fissures between workers and management. On the rocky economic terrain of the 1920s, however, the increasing investment in creating worker loyalty actually backlashed as the most fundamental demonstration of valuing workers—through wages—was ignored. Far from truly democratizing the company, Industrial Democracy had merely masked economic disparities beneath the "spirit of Cooperation" between workers and management.[89] The "man to man" system of Industrial Democracy was revealed not as a revolutionary power-sharing experiment, but instead as a scheme that solidified the authority of mill management by demanding absolute loyalty from workers whose wages depended upon men beyond their control. By valuing the image of workers' white respectability over workers' actual material well-being and value of their labor, Fitzgerald could not hold his happy company together for long.

Though management had wielded the YMCA, baseball, and Industrial Democracy as helpful ruses to ensure loyalty and worker harmony, workers themselves wielded these programs—especially Industrial Democracy—for their own benefit. As the labor historian Tom Tippett has argued, Industrial Democracy "accustomed [Dan River] workers to group action," by training them to participate in collective action and make their desires known to management.[90] To the later chagrin of mill management, it was through this same system of Industrial Democracy that workers were

[89] Fitzgerald, "H.R. Fitzgerald Address to Industrial Democracy Congress," July 14, 1921, 6.

[90] Tippett, *When Southern Labor Stirs*, 216.

trained to organize, speak up for themselves, and make demands of the mill president. As the economic landscape worsened in 1929, the gap between the needs of workers and the desires of management widened.

CHAPTER 6: STRIKE

Introduction

Over the summer of 1929, Industrial Democracy's House of Representatives at Dan River Mills reported feeling that president Harry Fitzgerald "had lost interest" in Industrial Democracy. Though he had enthusiastically implemented the scheme of worker representation in Dan River's corporate management, Fitzgerald now seemed merely "content to let it rock along," according to those millhands who participated in Industrial Democracy.[1] Concerned for the efficacy of this purportedly democratic system for shaping company policy, House Representatives requested that Fitzgerald address the body at their next meeting to assuage their anxiety that the program was on the decline. Fitzgerald seldom attended these deliberative gatherings but once a year. However, he agreed to meet with millhands in Industrial Democracy's House of Representatives as they requested. In a speech given at a June 1929 meeting of the House, Fitzgerald assured Representatives that he was still "most vitally interested" and would show them this as time went on. After a "hearty applause" by the House, Fitzgerald went back to letting Industrial Democracy rock along.[2]

Workers' doubts that summer about the efficacy of Industrial Democracy revealed the growing dissonance between workers and management despite management's efforts for harmony. Industrial Democracy had been a useful mechanism for management since the program was

[1] "Minutes of the House of Representatives," June 12, 1929, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[2] "Minutes of the House of Representatives."

implemented in 1919 at Dan River Mills. Mimicking the representative democratic processes of the United States government, the program promised workers a say in their welfare. With an outlet to air grievances and discuss their welfare "man to man," with Dan River executives millhands, management hoped, would not be tempted to organize an outside union.[3] For a while, management was able to stave off outside unions with the program of Industrial Democracy. In its first years, Industrial Democracy was supported by workers, who took the promises of the program at face value, believing in their strength to bend management's will towards bettering their welfare. However, as textile markets became unpredictable in the late 1920s, management was increasingly unwilling to sustain the farce of democratic governance. As management pulled away from their investment in the program, workers recognized that Industrial Democracy had "reached a low ebb." Coming in the fall of 1929, morale sunk as workers were increasingly being "dropped [from jobs] on short notice."[4] Those who kept their jobs noticed their wages were being unceremoniously dropped, too. The democratic tools millhands had to deal with these layoffs and declining pay suddenly seemed like playthings rather than the sturdy tools of democracy they had once been promised.

Industrial Democracy was one of the many tools that management had wielded to encourage worker comity and compliance in its mill village of Schoolfield. However, as this chapter shows, these complex mechanisms of worker representation, welfare, the built environment, and racial social privilege failed at a critical moment of economic upheaval. As profits sank at Dan River, management revealed their inflexibility and underlying insistence on authoritarian control. Management's once flush investments in establishing corporate harmony, especially the broad

[3] As discussed in the previous chapter, the underlying principle of Industrial Democracy, according to its "inventor" John Leitch was that workers and management should be able to conduct business not through a corporate hierarchy, but on the democratic principle of discussing and solving problems man to man. John Leitch, *Man to Man: The Story of Industrial Democracy* (New York: B.C. Forbes Company, 1919; Internet Archive, 2007), https://archive.org/details/mantomanstoryofi00leituoft.

[4] As quoted from the Danville *Register*, July 25, 1929 in King, "A Cultural Innovation That Failed," 121–23.

scheme of Industrial Democracy, ultimately fueled worker resentment and the reaction against the company. Underpaid and disenchanted, many millhands struck at Dan River in the fall and winter of 1930-1931. This strike was driven by their expectations of authority, the authority as white workers who been promised a say in their welfare and wages.

The depth of workers' resentment is animated through a detailed company archive that covers the fall of Industrial Democracy in its congressional minutes, interoffice memos, undercover operative reports, and other correspondence to the mill president Harry Fitzgerald. Thanks to Fitzgerald's hearing impediment that made him prefer memos and written correspondence in contrast to in-person meetings, the daily business of his administration figures prominently in the archive. As workers began to organize and finally strike, their movements, conversations, and opinions were also recorded by undercover mill operatives hired by management to surveil what they saw as an increasingly disloyal labor force. Dan River's company archive is flush with these daily undercover reports of the strike's progress, Fitzgerald's private and public correspondence, and even workers' letters written directly to the president to convince him to look elsewhere in cutting production costs. Taken with newspaper accounts of the strike and census records, these detailed accounts of the 1930 strike at Dan River offer valuable insight into the people who inhabited the world management built and rejected it in this process of economic and social unraveling. These detailed records tell a peopled story of the strike, allowing the focus to be on the millhands who briefly reclaimed Schoolfield, and Industrial Democracy, to assert their own power against the company.

The Veil of Benevolence Lifts

In the early years of Harry Fitzgerald's presidency that ran from 1918 until 1931, Dan River management committed to grand schemes for masculinity and worker welfare. Programs that attempted to encourage white masculinity and corporate fealty such as the Schoolfield Baseball

Association and Industrial Democracy proved popular among millhands and offered them a sense of the benefits of paternalism in its reciprocal obligations between management and workers. However, Dan River quickly moved to withdraw its commitments in 1929 when, like so many other businesses and families, the Great Depression sunk all hopes for a turn toward financial wellbeing. That year the company earned a mere $20,000 in net profit—a serious dip from previous years' profits that had been in the millions.[5]

Management's withdrawal from its commitment to worker welfare was done slowly and cautiously amidst rising regional labor tensions that erupted violently in the fall of 1929. Even before the market crash in October that left financial forecasts bleak, southern textile companies were already struggling to control a key component of their productivity: their workers. Across the south wages declined with the crippled demand for manufactured cloth. Southern millhands responded to these wage cuts through organizing efforts. In 1929 in places like Elizabethton, Tennessee, workers organized under the United Textile Workers of America (UTWA), an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor (AFL).[6] At the Loray Mills in Gastonia and Marion, North Carolina workers struck with the help of the communist-led National Textile Workers Union (NTWU).[7] These strikes and others across the south in 1929 garnered national attention for the violence that ensued.[8] While many of these strikes did not succeed in their goals, textile workers who went on strike at these southern textile companies set a foundation for workers at Dan River Mills, a company that

[5] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 554.

[6] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," *The Journal of American History* 73, no. 2 (September 1986): 354, https://doi.org/10.2307/1908226; See also Steven Kelly Knapp, "Women in the 1929 Textile Strikes in Elizabethton, Tennessee and Gastonia, North Carolina" (M.A., Tennessee, East Tennessee State University, 2016).

[7] John A. Salmond, *Gastonia, 1929: The Story of the Loray Mill Strike* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Travis Sutton Byrd, *Unraveled: Labor Strife and Carolina Folk during the Marion Textile Strikes of 1929*, First edition (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2015).

[8] Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia*, 205–330; Salmond, *Gastonia, 1929*; Wiley Cash, *The Last Ballad* (New York, N.Y: William Morrow, 2018).

increasingly became a strategic target for the UTWA in a broader scheme to organize the south. Even as Dan River management retreated from its promises of providing generously for its workers, management was determined to show these union organizers that the company could be a bulwark against any outside union efforts by maintaining worker fealty.

In this financial crisis, Dan River management attempted to balance their promises of democratic governance as a way to maintain worker loyalty even as they considered wage cuts. Fitzgerald himself responded to the dreary financial forecast by attempting to persuade House Representatives to accept a cut to their own wages via democratic vote. On January 9th, 1930, Harry Fitzgerald addressed the Representatives, explained the economic situation, and recommended that they vote to take a ten percent cut in their wages. Representatives earnestly expressed their cooperation in finding a solution to the company's economic troubles but were unwilling to immediately vote to cut their own wages without deliberation and compromise. One outspoken Representative, Bernice Long, a section hand at Dan River, responded directly to Fitzgerald that he hoped to cooperate with management. Long "of course did not want to have to accept a wage reduction…unless it were absolutely necessary," but showed his cooperative spirit with management. Long moved to appoint a committee of five Representatives to discuss the impending pay cut with the hope of finding an alternative solution that they could present to Fitzgerald. Long himself served on the committee, along with the Speaker of the House, E.L. Layne, and representatives Pritchett, James Nunn, and J.C. Yarborough from the company's Riverside Division.[9]

As soon as the committee was called together, rumors of this potential wage cut spread throughout Schoolfield revealing the rising tensions between workers and management despite

[9] "Minutes of the House of Representatives," January 9, 1930, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

Fitzgerald's attempt to maintain the show of democracy. Anonymous, threatening letters began arriving to Fitzgerald's office and his home. The day after Fitzgerald had addressed the House in January, a handwritten letter from "the Spiders" arrived at the Company Office building. "We got a messes that you was going to cut weages [sic]," it read, "and if you cant raze thim you hade better not cut thim and you are living well and if you cut weages we dont know what will happine [sic]."[10] This ominous threat was followed the next week by another more pointed letter from a writer who only identified himself as "B.H.G." In sprawling script, B.H.G wrote to Fitzgerald that "You can let the salaies stay as thear [sic]" or "take what flowows [sic]." Beneath the writing, the author drew a skull and cross bones, and just to be certain his threat was clear, he also drew a hand pointing to the skull with the words "this means you" written over the length of the hand.[11] So much, it seemed, for harmony between workers and management.

Meanwhile, the House committee appointed to discuss alternatives to the pay cut did not have any luck with Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald remained convinced that Representatives should vote for the pay cut, and Representatives, declared that there was not "any power that would cause our people to vote to cut their own wages."[12] At one point the committee suggested abandoning the company's extensive welfare program to cut overall costs, but to a man who believed he had "devoted his life to the betterment of his people" Fitzgerald could hardly consider such a plan.[13] Even as workers equated their own betterment with better wages, Fitzgerald continued to insist that his other forms of benevolence should have satisfied his obligation to workers.

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[10] The Spiders to H. R. Fitzgerald, January 1, 1930, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[11] B.H.G to H. R. Fitzgerald, January 21, 1930, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[12] Bernice C. Long to H. R. Fitzgerald, February 11, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[13] "The South: The New Labor and the Old," *New York Times Magazine*, June 15, 1930, 21, New York Times Timesmachine.

Despite the committee's resistance to Fitzgerald's proposed wage cut and the committee's suggestion to shut down welfare programs, Fitzgerald announced a ten percent wage decrease effective February 1st of 1930. Fitzgerald explained to workers and staff in a letter that this ten percent cut applied to all wages from the president down. "We have fought hard to stave this off as long as possible," Fitzgerald defended. Because this cut came from a company that had been "liberal in its provision for all of its Employees." With a reminder that management's generosity was not given unconditionally, Fitzgerald wrote that he hoped that each worker would "cheerfully accept the small sacrifice involved and be glad to cooperate in carrying out a policy that is so manifestly to the interest of all."[14] Though applied through all ranks, workers making the lowest wages would feel this cut the most keenly and may have had trouble accepting any such cut so cheerfully. Despite the detriment to most of his workers, Fitzgerald had made the company's financial solvency the priority. He made this shift without yielding his commitment to paternalism, expecting that now workers should happily accept wage cuts in accordance with the reciprocal duties and obligations that Dan River's welfare system, including the promises of Industrial Democracy, had bound them to deliver.

Yet Industrial Democracy is where the disharmony started. Even as Representatives formed a committee to study alternatives to the proposed ten percent cut, Fitzgerald made it manifestly clear to them that no alternative, would, in fact, be accepted by management. Fitzgerald's refusal to consider committee recommendations in January led several Representatives of that committee to seek recourse from officials of the American Federation of Labor. Led by President William Green, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had previously had only a small foothold at Dan River Mills with a loom fixers union, largely made up of workers at the Riverside Division. With a ten percent wage cut looming, however, many non-union men and women in Schoolfield, too, decided

[14] H. R. Fitzgerald, January 31, 1930, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

they no longer could "continue to subscribe to a policy of so-called Industrial Democracy which forces the workers downward" and would rather try their luck with a real union beyond the control of Dan River management.[15]

To ensure workers would not be swayed into organizing, once the wage cut went into effect in February, Fitzgerald turned to the local and regional press to push his narrative of continued corporate benevolence. On February 2nd, the *Greensboro Daily News* published a front-page article with Fitzgerald's portrait surrounded by acclamation of his management in tough times. The reporter, Dan Meeker, wrote in purple prose about his "nearly two-hour" interview with the "idealist" and "industrial leader" of Dan River Mills, Harry Fitzgerald. During a tour of the village, Fitzgerald gestured to the houses of the village proclaiming to Meeker that the village itself "is my answer to the cry of paternalism that comes from the radical groups" arguing that these modern homes and village design were part of a philosophy of management, not mere paternalism. "The people who work for the Riverside and Dan River mills are going to be happy," Fitzgerald said to Meeker, as long as it lies "within the power of the company to make them so."[16] Meeks concluded that though this sort of community building "may be a hobby," for the president, it was clear that Fitzgerald felt that it was "a privilege for him to be able to contribute toward the social uplift and moral improvement of his people."[17] Through the village design and programs like Industrial Democracy, Dan River management had attempted to guarantee the happiness of their workers. Management attempted this service, not as a duty or part of a social contract between management and workers, but as more of a hobby, a benevolence offered at the preference of the Dan River

[15] J.C. Blackwell to H. R. Fitzgerald, "Response to Poster No. 192," February 23, 1930, Box 32, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[16] Meeker, "Ten Per Cent Wage Cut May Not Mean Smaller Pay Checks at Danville," 7.

[17] Meeker, 7.

president, who was lauded for this particular liberal inclination. The fatal flaw in this system was that it relied upon Harry Fitzgerald's sole discretion. No worker's happiness could be guaranteed when it was held in the hands of one man who only professed democracy when he deemed economic conditions could allow it.

With the economic scarcity that came with the Great Depression, Fitzgerald, like many other businessmen, gave up his concern for workers' welfare in a desperate scramble to retain enough control over workers so that profitability could be maintained. His waning willingness to provide for workers' welfare reflected a broader national trend away from the liberal welfare capitalism ethos that businessmen had practiced throughout the 1920s. The American President, Herbert Hoover, embodied this particularly Republican zeal for corporate welfare, not federal intervention, as a solution to the interrelated economic problems of productivity, efficiency, and employee welfare.[18] With the ebb of 1920s prosperity, corporate managers, including Fitzgerald, were no longer willing to be the sole provider for employees for whom wages were more important than paternalistic welfare schemes.

As a businessman of Virginia, anti-democratic, oligarchical rule of the few was what Fitzgerald had been trained in, despite his early efforts to implement more Hoover-Republican ideals of welfare capitalism during the boom of the 1920s. As economic prosperity vanished, so did Fitzgerald's earnest efforts, and he fell back into what he knew best as a Virginian and as a Democrat: that society was best ruled by the few, and not the many. Virginia Democrats such as the former state Governor and Senator Claude Swanson and his nephew, the infamous Harry F. Byrd, Governor of Virginia and longtime leader of the state's Democratic political machine invested

[18] Robert H. Zieger, "Labor, Progressivism, and Herbert Hoover in the 1920's," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 58, no. 3 (1975): 196–208.

heavily in Dan River.[19] These Democrats had also invested in suffocating suffrage in the 1920s. Under Democratic rule in the Commonwealth of Virginia between the 1920s and 1940s, just fifteen percent of white citizens and eleven percent of all eligible citizens cast their votes in Democratic primaries—fewer than any other southern state.[20] Though Fitzgerald had initially balked against his fellow Virginia Democrats by offering corporate suffrage through Industrial Democracy, by 1930 his commitment to worker advocacy in wages and welfare diminished.

Workers themselves began to see the fragility of management's promises, cutting against Fitzgerald's image of himself as a liberal benefactor. One millhand, J.C. Blackwell, wrote to Fitzgerald to clarify that the American Federation of Labor representatives who had been consulted "are not foreign agitators but American citizens" delegated to "organize the workers and do business in an orderly manner with justice to employer and employee." Blackwell advised Fitzgerald that if he desired to restore confidence in workers, "why not restore our wages, meet us on a common ground and let us work out together a plan to reduce costs with fairness to the workers and the Company."[21] Blackwell's appeal to Fitzgerald in the language of brotherhood, patriotism, and justice failed to convince the entrenched oligarchical Virginian mill president into any revaluation of the wage cut, or possible union recognition.

The United Textile Workers of America Arrive "To Bury this System of So-Called Industrial Democracy"

Any further possibility for management and workers to meet on common ground was lost, however, when organizers from the AFL-affiliated United Textile Workers of America (UTWA) set up in Danville and Schoolfield in February of 1930. Organizers like Francis Gorman, the Vice

[19] Claude Swanson, a Pittsylvania County resident, was a particularly anxious stockholder, writing frequently to Fitzgerald requesting information on the company's earnings and business practices. For his numerous letters, see Boxes 12, 6, and 4 in Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[20] V. O. Key Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), 504-505.

[21] Blackwell to Fitzgerald, "Response to Poster No. 192," February 23, 1930, 1.

President of the UTWA, had come to the city after a group of millhands, including House Representative Bernice Long, requested their help resisting the wage cut that management had been imposed.

Gorman drew attention to the union's presence by giving incendiary public speeches that lambasted Dan River Mills management to large crowds throughout the city. In one early speech in front of a reported 1,500 people, Gorman declared that the UTWA was coming into Danville to "bury this system of so-called Industrial Democracy."[22] While the local papers, owned by Rorer James, Jr. who regularly corresponded with Fitzgerald, did not cover the speech in full, Dan River secretary C.D. Gaver jotted notes for Fitzgerald. Gaver reported that in his speech Gorman took a "special fling" at the company's welfare expenditures and the company's offering of group life insurance. "Who wanted insurance when you have to die to get it," Gaver reported Gorman as saying, "we will buy our own insurance; they only give it to you to tie you just like machines."[23] Gorman struck at Dan River management by criticizing the biggest source of their pride, namely, their investments and welfare, which management saw a beneficent provision for workers.

As organizers garnered the attention of Dan River millhands, management's strategy of resistance rested on disparaging organizers and their ideas as un-American threats to southern customs. Union organizers such as Francis Gorman and Matilda Lindsay were especially targeted as they coordinated strikes in Danville as well as the Leaksville-Draper-Spray area and Greensboro, North Carolina in a campaign against the unorganized textile south. Lindsay, the Vice President of the National Women's Trade Union League was a white, thirty-five-year-old single woman who lived in Richmond, Virginia. Management was convinced Lindsay was a "Jewess" who had changed

[22] "Gorman Declares Mills Here Have Broken Faith with President Hoover," *The Bee*, February 24, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

[23] C.D. Gaver to H. R. Fitzgerald, "Francis Gorman Speech Notes," February 24, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

her name, disguising her foreign, possibly Communist leanings.[24] Francis Gorman, the UTWA Vice President, similarly could come under the criticism of being a foreign agitator. Gorman was English and had emigrated to the United States as a teenager to work in a woolen mill in New England. A frequent orator, Gorman had not lost "his Yorkshire cadences," in the observation of one historian, making him notably different from the drawling southern workers and their management.[25] Management's imposed beliefs, baseless or real, of organizers reassured management of their stance that their opponents were outside the boundaries of an accepted Anglo-Saxon hierarchy. Excluded from this hierarchy, organizers were thus blamed for introducing dangerous ideas to mislead workers to unionize. Even as more and more Dan River workers swore allegiance to the United Textile Workers of America and the American Federation of Labor in early March, Dan River management leaned on their exclusionary presumptions.[26]

Dan River management not only attempted to convince themselves of union organizers as outside agitators, but they also worked quickly over the spring of 1930 to squash union efforts. In March, Fitzgerald used subversive tactics, employing spies from the State Investigative Agency, the Manufacturers Industrial Service and the infamous union-busting firm, Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, to surveil the village and Dan River workers.[27] Throughout the spring and into the fall and winter of 1930, Fitzgerald had no fewer than ten spies reporting back to him about labor organizing attempts in Schoolfield, Greensboro, and in the nearby Leaksville-Draper-Spray mill

[24] R.L.L. to H. R. Fitzgerald, March 27, 1930, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[25] John A. Salmond, *General Textile Strike of 1934: From Maine to Alabama* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002; ProQuest Ebook Central), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=3570720, 37.

[26] "Mill Workers Take Textile Union Oath," *The Bee*, March 3, 1930, 3.

[27] "Manufacturers Industrial Service Contract with Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills," February 25, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, "Invoice 6998, Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills Company," March 31, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

towns.[28] Fitzgerald's tactics were not new in the broader history of textile management's attempts to quell unionization, but his employ of spies signaled a weakening of confidence in his own knowledge of, and power over, Dan River millhands.[29] Fitzgerald had long depended on the "immense advantage" of his welfare and Industrial Democracy, which he saw as the "orderly systems" by which to "feel the pulse of your people and to know what they are thinking."[30] With workers' disengagement from those systems, Fitzgerald had to find other means of knowing the minds and hearts of his millhands.

For the mill president who had boasted that his company "work[ed] with, rather than for" workers, union activities and acts of disloyalty were particularly hard for Fitzgerald to take.[31] Fitzgerald let out his rage on individual workers in the early months of 1930. With the information, courtesy of his network of spies, about which workers were or were not pro-union, by March Fitzgerald began discharging workers. Fitzgerald fired almost one hundred millhands by April. These workers often received no explanation for being fired, even though they may have worked at the mills for decades was the case of one Riverside worker, Minnie Barbour, who had worked at Dan River for forty years.[32] Management was not shy about discharging workers, and openly

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[28] Many of these agents' full, daily reports are extant in the archives. These agents wrote their reports under pseudonyms with initials (operatives A.B., A.F., A.G., A.J., B.K.) or with numbers like (Operatives 794, 99, 299, 748) and one spy who simply noted his reports as coming from Operative XX-1.

[29] Pinkerton's had been stalling strikes since the 1870s and were used to botch union plans in both the northern and southern industries. See Morris Friedman, *The Pinkerton's Labor Spy* (New York : Wilshire book Co., 1907; Internet Archive, 2009), http://archive.org/details/pinkertonslabor00friegoog; Cliff Kuhn, *Contesting the New South Order: The 1914-1915 Strike at Atlanta's Fulton Mills* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); S. Paul O'Hara, *Inventing the Pinkertons; or, Spies, Sleuths, Mercenaries, and Thugs: Being a Story of the Nation's Most Famous (and Infamous) Detective Agency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016; ProQuest Ebook Central), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=4531471.

[30] Fitzgerald, "Rotary Speech: The True Ethical Standard for Employers and Employees," 6.

[31] H. R. Fitzgerald, "Information for the Industrial Relations Committee of the American Cotton Manufacturers Association," November 2, 1928, 3, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[32] Buford Nash and J.C. Blackwell to H. R. Fitzgerald, April 10, 1930, Box 32, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

corresponded via interoffice memos with lists of workers in March from their carding weaving, shipping and bleaching departments who were dropped from payroll due to "unsatisfactory work" underlined to emphasize the real meaning of expulsion: workers' "union activities," as other management correspondence revealed.[33] As these discharges piled on, the UTWA leaders took notice and an incendiary mood spread through Schoolfield.

That mood revealed itself in a letter written to HF by a fired millhand, Milton Peebles, who denied he had done anything wrong besides exercising his "right as an American citizen" to organize and do as Fitzgerald had recommended all millworkers do: "think for themselves." "If you think for one minute," Peebles's cautioned, "that the people of the two mills was satisfied, you have been misinformed badly." The ten percent cut had made the millhands lose interest in their work, Peebles argued, and Fitzgerald was causing further harm by discharging workers interested in joining a union as recourse. To Peebles, Fitzgerald's actions were destroying all confidence in the company and inflaming "disrespect for [Fitzgerald] and the officials in charge."[34]

In response to the company's widespread firing of union-leaning employees, the UTWA planned a parade that would demand justification for the firings and offer workers an outlet for their bitterness toward Fitzgerald. According to spies who reported to Fitzgerald in the weeks leading up to the parade, workers were excited for the event. Undercover operative "A.B." overheard one millhand say that he certainly wanted to be at the parade "for he wanted to ride a big white horse in front of all the rest" just as Fitzgerald had done in years past.[35] Another millhand boasted that they were going to "march up in front of Mr. Fitzgerald's house and sing, 'My Country Tis of Thee'" to

[33] Claude E. Clarke to H. R. Fitzgerald, March 22, 1930, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; C.C. Bolen to H. R. Fitzgerald, March 22, 1930, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[34] Melton M. Peebles to H. R. Fitzgerald, March 18, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[35] A.B., "Operative Report; March 23, 1930," March 23, 1930, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

assail what they saw as Fitzgerald's shift away from American principles of equality and democratic processes.[36] Amped by union promises for a remedy to management's waning commitment to welfare, many millhands eagerly awaited the time they could show Fitzgerald that they were "were waking up and doing something," as Francis Gorman described it in a March speech to Dan River millhands. Gorman assured workers that even if they lost their jobs by joining the parade, they would not want for anything. Shored up with union dues and hoped-for financial support from the AFL, the union would help, organizers promised, those who stood up for themselves against management. Many workers were convinced of the union's potential strength, rallying to say that they would "show [Fitzgerald] who is boss because he can't fire anyone anymore."[37]

Workers' confidence in the union was fortified at the planned parade on April 5th, when the UTWA made an "impressive demonstration" of defiance against Fitzgerald, who had previously dismissed union organizers as "foreign agitators," rather than a manifestation of homegrown dissent.[38] The local press, usually under Fitzgerald's thumb, described the "union parade" as "most formidable ever undertaken by organized labor in Danville."[39] As the UTWA led thousands of workers up West Main Street to Schoolfield from downtown Danville, these workers publicly showcased their complaints against the company—including being unjustly fired and unfairly paid—on large placards for all to read. Workers' banners included messages like "We are the undesirables,"

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[36] A.B., "Operative Report; March 29, 1930," March 29, 1930, 29, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[37] Mill informant, "Labor Meeting Notes," March 22, 1930, 2, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; Mill informant to H. R. Fitzgerald, April 2, 1930, 4,5, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[38] "Union to Follow up Protest," *The Bee*, April 7, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com; In a now-lost poster put up in Dan River departments, Fitzgerald called for workers to dismiss the rumblings of unionists, who he declared were "foreign agitators." This declaration was quickly rebutted by local union-leader J.C. Blackwell, who wrote to Fitzgerald "we want you to know the American Federation of Labor and the officials of that organization came to Danville at our request for a union. The representatives who came here are not foreign agitators, but American citizens delegated by President Green of the [AFL] to assist us." Blackwell to Fitzgerald, "Response to Poster No. 192," February 23, 1930.

[39] "Union to Follow up Protest," 1.

signaling those who had been unjustly discharged, and "55 hours for $13—how can we live?" [40] These placards scorned low wages and were displayed especially for those Dan River executives who dwelled in some of the stately West Main Street houses, including Harry Fitzgerald himself.

Figure 42. The union had a strong showing at the textile workers' parade in April of 1930 as thousands marched from downtown Danville to Ballou Park near Schoolfield. Photo courtesy of Judy Edmonds.

The parade ended with a mass meeting at the nearby Ballou Park, the common site of so many former Dan River-sponsored picnics and celebrations. A litany of impressive union representatives, including local union leader Buford Nash, UTWA Vice President Francis Gorman, a representative for AFL leader William Green, and Virginia Federation of Labor president R.T. Bowden, graced the stage at Ballou Park, which was set up with electric speakers to carry their speeches into Schoolfield and along West Main Street. Yet, more powerful for these attendees may have been the fact that the extraordinary gathering in Ballou Park occurred without the blessing, coordination, or control of Dan River management. The 4,600 attendees—almost as many as all the

[40] "Union to Follow up Protest," 1.

5,000 workers at Dan River—were perhaps less interested in the speakers at the mass meeting than they were in rediscovering their own power over space without the blessing of Dan River management. Men like Fitzgerald had for so long ordered these workers' worlds, and the workers now sought their power over spaces and the means through which they could communicate their own needs. In re-claiming the space over Ballou Park and Fitzgerald's own property, workers found the means to voice their dissent in familiar avenues of the built environment.

The April parade marked the final break between Fitzgerald and his workers, who he now categorized as either "loyal" or "doubtful" in a running list that he began the Monday after the parade.[41] Even if workers were loyal, Fitzgerald began working them harder than before. Under a system that other southern textile managers had used, known as the stretch out, Fitzgerald directed department managers to work more looms at Dan River with fewer workers and within a shorter time frame. This program may have been simply a worker incentive scheme that encouraged individual millhands to work faster, the stretch out was also an effective strategy to rid the company of the union faction.[42] Many of the pro-union workers stemmed from the weaving department, where the stretch out centered. Labor organizers latched on to the stretch out as yet another instance of management's cruelty. One union organizer, C.W. Bolick, explained the situation to sociologist Harriet Herring, who visited Danville in the fall of 1930 to document the strike at Dan River. Bolick objected to the stretch out because "it works the operative too hard" making him "rush all the time" with not a minute to sit down through a shift as had previously been permitted.

[41] H. R. Fitzgerald, "Loyal, #2 Weave," September 12, 1930, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[42] For a later analysis of the stretch out system and how it influenced unionization efforts, see James J. Lorence, "The Workers of Chicopee: Progressive Paternalism and the Culture of Accommodation in a Modern Mill Village," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 91, no. 3 (2007): 292–323, 305.

Additionally, the stretch out threw skilled and more highly laborers out of work, forcing them to take unskilled work or none at all, Bolick complained.[43]

Fitzgerald's Pinkerton spies, too, regularly reported complaints from Dan River workers subjected to the stretch-out system throughout the summer and fall of 1930. At first workers protested the imposition of a shorter workday and the backdoor wage cut that resulted from fewer hours. "The employees appear to be somewhat disgusted," one undercover operative reported, because they were "compelled to wait outside of the gate [of the mills] until 6:30 [in the morning] before they can get in" and were made to stop the looms during the lunch hour, shaving off a good ninety-minutes of work in a shift that was usually ten to eleven hours long. One Schoolfield worker showed the undercover operative his abbreviated time slip, saying "this is damn reason why the union is here."[44] Other workers were similarly dismayed by the stretch out. When asked by an undercover operative how his looms were running, one worker with a "red face" shot back that "this is the worst job he has ever seen…you do not have damn minute for anything." The worker grumbled that "Fitzgerald himself should be made to run the looms one day "and then he would see how much a slave we are."[45]

As working conditions deteriorated over the summer, the Congress of Industrial Democracy met for the last time in June of 1930. The dwindled congressional body met the in the shadow of a successful week-long labor-sponsored Chautauqua near the Schoolfield ball field that swelled with over 3,000 attendees.[46] The diminished meeting of Congress brought into a stark relief the shift in

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[43] Herring, "Labor Troubles in the Danville Area," 13–14.

[44] A.F., "Operative Report; April 14, 1930," April 14, 1930, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; A.F., "Operative Report; April 19, 1930," April 19, 1930, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[45] A.F., "Operative Report; May 7, 1930," May 7, 1930, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[46] "Gaylord Is Speaker at Labor Meet: Scores Industrial Democracy in Address Before 3,000 at the Fair Grounds," *The Bee*, June 12, 1930, Newspapers.com.

power with the union whose organizers "felt assured of victory" in wage negotiations despite Industrial Democracy.[47] With thousands of Dan River millhands discharged, justly or unjustly, by management, Industrial Democracy's membership too had waned along with its power and, ultimately, the system's legitimacy. Although he still claimed Industrial Democracy as alive and well, Fitzgerald did not make his traditional August annual address to congress that summer, signaling his own acknowledgement of the program's failed efficacy and his withdrawal from its tenets.

By September of 1930, Fitzgerald had cut wages for all clerical staff and department managers by twenty-five percent.[48] The mill whistle, the usual signal of shift change productivity in Schoolfield fell silent as the number of workers at the mill dropped significantly from its previous boast of nearly 5,000 millhands. There was similarly nothing to boast about regarding welfare. Not only had Industrial Democracy ended, but Fitzgerald had also shut down the entirety of Dan River's welfare operations. With wages well under what they were used it, even managers may have found it difficult to keep the flame of management's supposed benevolence burning. By orchestrating mass layoffs, surveilling millhands, implementing a stretch out, and rescinding Dan River's welfare program, Fitzgerald had clearly retreated from his previous claims of corporate generosity.

Union Strike Meets Management's Silence

With employees' wages across ranks slashed, no welfare operating such as the nursery, medical offices, or even YMCA, Francis Gorman declared to one millhand crowd that the position of the union in Danville was "now better than ever."[49] With confidence that the "sentiment of the community [was] favorably to the union" Gorman coordinated with UTWA Local 1685 leaders such

[47] Tippett, *When Southern Labor Stirs*, 218.

[48] H. R. Fitzgerald to L.J. Rushworth, August 15, 1930, Box 35, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[49] "Confidential Report on the Labor Conference for Progressive Labor Action Brookwood Labor College," August 31, 1930, 1, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

as Buford Nash and J.C. Blackwell to put the pressure on management at Dan River.[50] While the UTWA publicly noted that a strike would be their last resort, Gorman recognized that Dan River workers "want strikes, plenty of relief and quick action," and the UTWA planned to deliver.[51]

Yet the decisive support that Gorman proclaimed was less definite when viewed at the local level. Some undercover operatives reported that most of the millworkers who attended union meetings and signed up for the union "do not know exactly that they are joining" and rarely paid the full dues, undermining the economic strength of unionizing efforts.[52] Despite public optimism, at some of the smaller union meetings, union leaders acknowledged that the mixed bag of their membership might not lead to success if a strike was called. Gorman, Nash and Buford were "seriously worried over the outcome" of a possible strike at Dan River in early September.[53] But with Dan River as a wage setter for the southern textile industry, Danville and Schoolfield became a strategic target to raise wages across the region.[54] With the "eyes of the entire south" on Dan River workers, union leaders were compelled to strike and make Danville the centerpiece of a broader southern strategy.[55]

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[50] "Confidential Report on the Labor Conference for Progressive Labor Action Brookwood Labor College," 1.

[51] "Confidential Report on the Labor Conference for Progressive Labor Action Brookwood Labor College," 2.

[52] #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1; September 3, 1930," September 3, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[53] #99, "Special Work: Report of Operative #99; September 11, 1930," September 11, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[54] In 1929, the United Textile Workers of American had followed the American Federation of Labor's call for a greater focus on organizing the south when a "favorable opportunity arose." The stretch out presented that opportunity in 1929. At the gateway to the south, Dan River Mills became an opportune target. Robert R. Brooks, "The United Textile Workers of America," (PhD diss., Yale University, 1935). ProQuest (AAT 6501959), 145-148. Aaron Brenner and Benjamin Day, *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 337-338. See also "The Textile Worker" 17 (May 1929), p 553-554, 652, 718-719.

[55] #99, "Special Work: Report of Operative #99; September 11, 1930," September 11, 1930.

The UTWA called their strike at Dan River on Monday, September 29, 1930. That day, Fitzgerald, who was staying with family in Charlottesville, ordered that the mills be shut until management could "ascertain what proportion of the employees are loyal to the company and desire to continue their work." In a private letter to the newspaper editor Rorer James Jr., Fitzgerald explained that for "47 years our company has operated continuously with mutual trust and confidence between employer and employee." Fitzgerald refused to acknowledge to the editor that there was "any real grievance or any fundamental difference between the management or the operatives" that the union had touted as the reason for the strike. Fitzgerald argued that the responsibility for the strike, and the employees, businesses, and community it would ensnare "rest upon those who have called it."[56]

Fitzgerald, who had usually used the local press to shape public opinion about Dan River, remained oddly silent about the strike in the press. With a full spread across the afternoon local papers that Monday, the column offering Dan River management's side of the strike was sparse, filled up only with the last public statement Fitzgerald made regarding the wage cut that past February.[57] Management seemed inaccessible and distant; their power waning in comparison with the 3,000 textile workers who had gathered to inaugurated the first day of the strike at Ballou Park, or the hundreds who lined the gates of the mills forming pickets to keep workers out. With no official statement from management, the local paper declared that in the first day of the strike, the union picketers had won.[58]

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[56] H. R. Fitzgerald to Rorer A. James Jr., September 28, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[57] "Attitude of Mills As to Cut in Wage," *The Bee*, September 29, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

[58] "Pickets Win First Tilt in Strike," *The Bee*, September 29, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

Fitzgerald still held his reins of control, however. The weekend before the strike, Fitzgerald was visited in Charlottesville by district union leader C.W. Bolick and others to see if an agreement could not be made before striking. With yet no Wagner Act of the New Deal that in the future would require employers to engage in negotiations, Fitzgerald was free to refuse "to recognize the union or to enter into negotiations with them." As the Danville *Bee* reported, Fitzgerald insisted that he would only consider worker grievances "through the machinery of the old industrial democracy system" but that he would not acknowledge grievances stemming from an outside organization.[59] By keeping union organizers out of the conversation, Fitzgerald's silence was a strategic way to make the case that unionists were indeed outsiders.

Fitzgerald's reticence was both strategic and reactive. It could have stemmed from the recommendation Dan River's lawyer, Malcolm Harris, who advised days prior to the strike that "we should make it very plain that we cannot and will not recognize the union as a party to any such discussion" over wages or worker grievances. To keep the company's reputation as a benevolent institution that anticipated and provided for workers' needs, Harris cautioned that management would have to very patiently but firmly "refuse to enter into any conference at which any union representative was present or for that matter to enter into any second-hand negotiations with the union through government representatives." With such advice from a trusted lawyer, Fitzgerald kept his mouth shut to maintain an edge on the union.[60] When the Virginia Governor, John Garland Pollard, offered to establish a board to mediate between the union and company to end the strike, Fitzgerald swiftly replied in line with Harris's advice that "there was nothing to mediate."[61] Fitzgerald continued to insist that his workers knew better than to go through other means than the

[59] "Non-Union Group Prevented from Entering Mills," *The Bee*, September 29, 1930, 6, Newspapers.com.

[60] Malcolm K. Harris to H.R. Fitzgerald, September 25, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[61] "His Reply to Gov. Pollard Is Attacked," *The Bee*, October 3, 1930, 10, Newspapers.com.

committees afforded them by Industrial Democracy, even as that scheme had crumbed by the fall. Union leaders decried Fitzgerald's policy of silence. The union complained to Governor Pollard, saying that Fitzgerald only "pretends to be ignorant" of the reasons that compelled workers to organize, namely the "intolerant conditions" at the mills and "sickening failure of the so-called Industrial Democracy" to resolve them.[62]

Yet, Fitzgerald's silence could have also been a helpful defensive mechanism for being not entirely informed about the labor situation due to his increasing deafness. Beginning when he was twenty-five, Fitzgerald had slowly been losing his hearing. Fitzgerald's deafness was an ailment that hobbled his public persona in the eyes of some millhands, especially as he got older. Fitzgerald learned how to maintain his authority despite his deafness and used a hearing device known as a dictograph at his office, home, and even had these installed in the pews at his Danville church.[63] Apart from these hearing aids, Fitzgerald also learned how to lip-read. Defiant of this handicap, Fitzgerald proudly overcame his deafness for most of his tenure as mill president.

[62] "His Reply to Gov. Pollard Is Attacked," 1.

[63] Fitzgerald to Keeney, January 7, 1921.

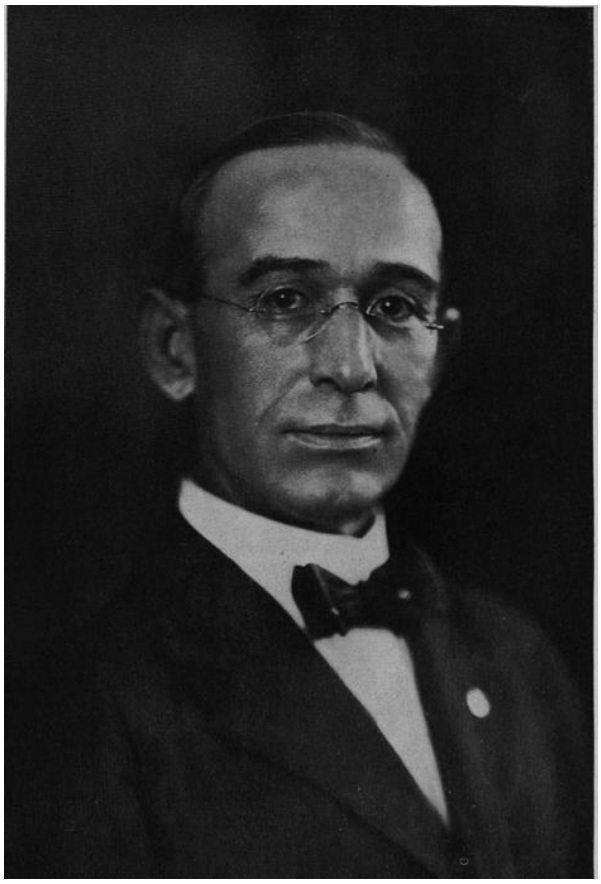

Figure 43. As the kind of man "who would not accept afflictions," H.R. Fitzgerald earnestly masked his weaknesses in order to appear authoritative and influential in the mill community. This portrait photo is from a biographical piece done on Fitzgerald in the Volta Review, a "Magazine for the Deaf, the Hard of Hearing and Their Friends," January 1924.

Though Fitzgerald preferred to publicly showcase this mastery over his deafness, many Schoolfielders noticed it all the more. This was especially true for the children in the village who were being groomed for future work at the mills. A proud man, who was not the type to "accept afflictions," Fitzgerald did not give up his passion for oration despite his deafness, and subjected Schoolfielders to annual addresses, weekly sermons and frequent moral lectures. Claude Chattin, who grew up in the village in the 1910s and later worked as a carder at Dan River, remembered that Fitzgerald was a "very conscientious man" who had "wanted to do well by the people." Chattin remembered how Fitzgerald's deafness gave him somewhat of a speech impediment that muddled the moral sermons he gave weekly to village children, making him somewhat of a comical figure.

Ethel Knick remembered, too, that Fitzgerald would often come to the schools and give lengthy talks even though his speaking voice was "not good...very erratic and you couldn't understand everything that he said."[64] Chattin did not mind the lectures, although he got the feeling that Fitzgerald often thought he "knew better than the people."[65] Perhaps it was just that Fitzgerald couldn't hear the people, or the tone of their criticisms of him. Although a prominent sermonizer amidst children in the village, to the adults over which he had less control, Fitzgerald no doubt avoided engaging in lengthy debates. When it came to labor negotiations, Fitzgerald's communication issues were likely the cause for his reticence as much as his pride.

A month into the strike, union leaders were puzzled by management's continued silence, which seemed to be working by hindering any movement on strikers' demands.[66] Some workers were maddened by it. One anonymous criticizer wrote to Fitzgerald that he was a "heartless old gray hair scoundrel and a liar and a typical old ruling capitalist" and added "I hope you die soon."[67] Another made his critiques known in more biblical tones. "Like King Pharaoh," the anonymous writer wrote, "he turns a deaf ear to the cries of his fellowman who are merely striking for justice and industrial freedom." "Remember," the writer continued in his conjoining of millhands as slaves and their leaders as Moses, "God will…deal out justice to the pharaohs of today just as he did to the pharaohs of old."[68] Another writer reminded Fitzgerald of his moral lectures and similarly invoked the Bible, writing that he had heard Fitzgerald say many times, "Trust in GOD. That is what we [strikers] trust in and so should you DO UNTO OTHERS AS YE HAVE OTHERS DO UNTO

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[64] Ethel Posey Knick, interview by David E. Hoffman, 1984, Averett University Collections.

[65] Claude Chattin, interview by Jack Irby Hayes, 1984, Averett University Collections.

[66] "Silence Marks Union Strike Here: Union Reported Puzzled Over Shut-Mouth Policy of Textile Officials," *The Bee*, October 30, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

[67] Anonymous to H. R. Fitzgerald, 1930ca, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[68] symphiser [sic] to H. R. Fitzgerald, 1930ca, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

YOU."[69] Stripped of the opportunity to mediate and with no other source of influence to make Fitzgerald listen, workers used written insults, personal and moral, to reprimand their former boss as they continued to struggle for "honest demands."[70]

Businessmen and southern manufacturers, in contrast, praised Fitzgerald's continued silence, which lasted into the winter of 1930. Combined with a swath of admiring stockholders, Fitzgerald boasted a strong network of support in his industry colleagues.[71] Fitzgerald was a founding member of the Cotton-Textile Institute, a national trade association that researched and lobbied for the cotton industry, and Fitzgerald was president of the American Cotton Manufacturers Association, making him a leader in industry and well-known in local and regional business circles. Since the initial February wage cut was implemented at Dan River, national and local businessmen wrote to Fitzgerald words of encouragement and praise. H.L. Boatwright, a Danville executive with the Dibrell Brothers tobacco company, assured Fitzgerald of his "thorough confidence" and expressed his "feeling sure the matter which now confronts you will be handled in the very best manner for all concerned."[72] In Lynchburg, Virginia, Quinn-Marshall Company's W.J.D. Bell lamented that "it almost causes one to lose faith in human nature" to see strikers who had benefited from the company's vast welfare "lend a willing ear to agitators." Millhands, in Bell's opinion, had thrown "everything aside for some fancy grievance," built on the fantastical assumption of class elevation through union membership. Bell concluded that Fitzgerald was "absolutely sound" in his decision

[69] 100% Unions to H. R. Fitzgerald, "Notice Mr. H.R. Fitzgerald," 1930, Box 32, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[70] symphiser [sic] to Fitzgerald, 1930ca.

[71] Jack Irby Hayes and Dictionary of Virginia Biography, "Fitzgerald, H. R. (1873–1931)," https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Fitzgerald_H_R_1873-1931.

[72] H.L. Boatwright to H. R. Fitzgerald, September 30, 1930, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

not to deal with the labor organizers.[73] Along with these Virginia businessmen, other southerners including an executive at Cherry Cotton Mills in Florence, Alabama offered Fitzgerald the solace of knowing that "the entire southern cotton textile industry is with you—heart and soul."[74] As Fitzgerald's vast network applauded his method, Fitzgerald continued his silence, conveying a stronghold of company power that could withstand a lengthy strike by ignoring worker demands.

Violence and the Drawing of New Lines of Class and Race in Schoolfield

What Fitzgerald could not ignore was the violence that ruptured the racial harmony for which Schoolfield was founded. Letters from pro-union workers and affidavits from non-union workers reveal the disharmony among workers and management caused by mass layoffs, a stalled welfare system, and the yet unfulfilled promise of retribution that could come with a strike. While mill management waited silently for the strike to end and the union anxiously waited for more funds, antagonistic strikers took the opportunity to wreak havoc on those employees still going to work. Buoyed by inflammatory language by Francis Gorman, whose speeches at labor rallies had made promises to "bury" Industrial Democracy, these former millhands vandalized and damaged houses and intimidated and physically assaulted those workers known to be most loyal to Fitzgerald and the company in Schoolfield. The "strongest opposition to the Industrial Democracy comes from Schoolfield," as one undercover operative observed, and strikers' target of the mill town was not by happenstance.[75] In that community where everyone felt as one, dissent was nearly intolerable. With so many having joined the union and perhaps, weeks in, regretting it and feeling the pinch of poverty, non-strikers were stigmatized, bullied, threatened and assaulted.

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[73] W.J.D. Bell to H. R. Fitzgerald, October 1, 1930, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[74] M.W. Darby to H. R. Fitzgerald, October 23, 1930, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[75] A.G., "Operative Report; September 24, 1930."

The strike gave license to troublemaker union members who began badgering, intimidating and physically attacking management and non-union workers, and sometimes their neighbors and friends, who remained loyal to the company. These threats were often veiled in familiar southern rhetoric reserved for white violence against Black people, but in the eyes of many unionists, white workers who remained loyal to the company deserved the same violent treatment. A thirty-five-year-old Schoolfield millhand, J.B. Shackleford, was one worker who received threats from strikers. Shackleford was among seven workers who signed an affidavit swearing that a faction of pro-union workers had intimidated and threatened him. Though Shackleford had joined the union in the spring, he had dropped out. Shackleford's refusal to rejoin inspired one union member named Lasseter, who had worked as a weaver, to threaten Shackleford in a language of the south. Using the phrasing of a southern lynch mob leader, Lasseter told Shackleford that the union was going to strike in two weeks and if Shackleford did not strike they would get him at night and "tie a rope around your neck and drag you out of town." As if that wasn't direct enough, Lasseter framed his next threat with the story of the 1917 Danville lynching of a Black man named Walter Clark, who Lasseter himself may have witnessed being burned out of his home. "God damn you," Lasseter barked at Shackleford, "if that don't do we will stick fire to your house and burn it down on you."[76]

Group violence against Dan River millhands took on not just the rhetoric, but also the behavior of Virginia lynch mobs. As historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage describes, many lynchings of Black people were led by private, small groups who were metaphorically or quite literally ginned up for violence.[77] In a similar fashion, as one undercover operative found out when he joined a group of strikers one night, strikers assembled together to inflict mayhem on white Dan River workers. An

[76] Odell Riley et al., "Strike Breaker Affidavits" (Danville, Virginia: State of Virginia, County of Pittsylvania, 1930), 2, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[77] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South,* 66.

undercover operative reported that a gang of three or four renegade strikers had hopped in a car with their guns and rode around the village. They would stop only to get "filled up with liquor" and then start out "on a rampage" again, shooting around houses and at trucks that they thought were bringing cotton to the mills.[78] In November of 1930 alone, these renegade strikers were responsible for at least seven different accounts of intimidation, shootings, and even bombings and sometimes were arrested by Danville police.[79]

These groups of strikers did not just direct their violence at fellow white operatives, but also ensured that Black workers at Dan River would meet consequences for their continued loyalty to the mill. Strikers may have been responsible for bombing the homes of John Price and Henry Swann, two Black janitorial workers who lived near Schoolfield. Black workers, at least at Riverside, had early on assured Fitzgerald of their loyalty back when the wage cut was announced in February.[80] For Price and Swann, their continued service to the company as scourers and sweepers could have been the reason that their homes were attacked. These Black workers' safe harbor with the company at a time when the strike's outcome looked like it would favor the company may have enraged white strikers who were suffering from a dwindling supply of food, resources, and shelter.

While early dashes of threats and actual violence in Schoolfield in the fall were humiliating to management who wanted to maintain the façade of control, the winter got worse. So much jeering and physical manhandling was going on at the pickets surrounding the mill that Schoolfield and Danville police had to direct workers heading to the mills along a few dedicated streets, patrolled by offices during shift changes.[81] Amid this disorder, Dan River management maneuvered to boost the

[78] #299, "Special Work: Report of Operative #299; November 18, 1930," November 18, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[79] "Five Arrests Made in Dynamitings," *The Bee*, November 21, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

[80] Cassye Williams et al. to H. R. Fitzgerald, February 26, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[81] "Union Finances Claim Interest: Local Heads Deny Money Difficulties," 3.

police presence in Schoolfield and in Danville and ensure they were on high alert for nightly troublemakers and the daily swarm of strikers at mill gates each day. Dan River management even filed at this time for an injunction that would allow local police to limit the number of picketers at each mill gate. Though the union filed for the injunction to be dismissed, a Pittsylvania County court judge helped the company retain control over the strike keeping the injunction against picketers.[82] Yet, the chaos of a splintered community continued in tandem with Fitzgerald's silence and resistance to mediation.

Disappointing Welfare Returns of the Union

Despite workers' energetic resistance to Dan River, just two weeks after the strike was called, union organizers were becoming "much more pessimistic and…very much worried because of the financial question," as one spy reported after attending a union meeting. Organizers like Francis Gorman had hoped that "the larger international units would contribute liberally to the support of the strike," but, the spy continued, "[t]his hope has not materialized."[83] Local reporters, too, picked up on the financial worry of organizers. In their coverage of the on-going strike, the Danville *Bee*'s reporters stated that the duration of the strike seemed to depend on how much money, food supplies, and other necessities the AFL, the parent organization of UTWA, could "throw into the struggle."[84] With so many people facing financial distress, management's plutocratic position was strong in comparison to the barely filled union coffers. Though leaders publicly claimed no financial difficulties, their worries trickled down the ranks to Dan River's union members.[85] One undercover

[82] "Union Loses Fight on Court Order," *The Bee*, October 15, 1930, 1.

[83] #99, "Special Work: Report of Operative #99," October 14, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[84] "Silence Marks Union Strike Here: Union Reported Puzzled Over Shut-Mouth Policy of Textile Officials," 1.

[85] "Union Finances Claim Interest: Local Heads Deny Money Difficulties," *The Bee*, October 22, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

operative who was working in Danville and other mill towns actively organizing like Greensboro, North Carolina reported that "a number of strikers [in Danville] are getting out of heart...it is plainly to be seen that they are worried."[86]

Strikers had a good deal to be worried about. When millhands left the employ of the mill to fight for better working conditions and wages, Dan River quickly rescinded the privilege of their company houses. Union leaders were at odds with what to do with the evicted millhands; where some wanted to rent out houses for the evicted families and move their items quickly into a new home, others, like regional organizer C.W. Bolick wanted to use the evictions to demonstrate the mill's cruelty. Bolick thought that by "letting the furniture stay in the streets it would get the sympathy of the public."[87] When the first eviction happened in early October of J.O. Morrison, a Riverside loom fixer, strikers saw what they, too, soon might face: the loss of their home, their community, and their belongings strewn out in the street "without any remonstrance of any kind" from the union.[88] In response to being used by organizers as a publicity stunt, some union men were "giving the union the dickens," saying "to hell with such a union," according to one spy's report.[89]

With the threat of evictions and dwindling union coffers, morale among strikers sank. Francis Gorman, popular among the pro-union Dan River workers, had left Danville to raise funds for the strike.[90] But little came of Gorman's visit with President Herbert Hoover and the Secretary

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[86] #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1," October 30, 1930, 30, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[87] #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1," October 11, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.; Leaving furniture out in the streets on the day of the eviction was a strategy employed during the Fulton Mill strikes fifteen years prior. Kuhn, *Contesting the New South Order*.

[88] "Confer with Governor on Mill Strike," *The Bee*, October 7, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

[89] #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1"; Leaving furniture out in the streets on the day of the eviction was a strategy employed during the Fulton Mill strikes fifteen years prior. Kuhn, *Contesting the New South Order*.

[90] #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1," November 15, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

of Labor.[91] Francis Gorman returned to Danville from his fundraising travels with confidence, but without the funds needed to keep the strike strong. The Secretary of Labor James Davis dealt another blow to the organizers cause, declaring, after a meeting with Danville organizers and a follow-up interview with Harry Fitzgerald, that the United States Labor Department would not get involved in mediation efforts.[92] Though strikers still attended union meetings and stuck it out on the picket line, these disappointments dampened morale. As one undercover operative reported, "a lot of the people are disgusted with such promises as have been made" but not yet fulfilled.[93] To say the least, one undercover operative wrote, "there is a large number of disappointed people amongst the strikers."[94] By mid-November, the picket lines began to have a "pathetic" and "disheartened appearance."[95]

Strikers' disappointment and disgust were fed partially by a counter effort to draw support away from the UTWA. In October, Danville police detained a man named William Murdoch, who worked for the National Textile Workers Union (NTWU).[96] The NTWU was a union organization affiliated with the Communist party and had gained notoriety for the violent strike in Gastonia,

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[91] "Strike Development Monday Hinted," *The Bee*, November 15, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com; #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1; November 15, 1930," 1.

[92] "Davis Not to Intervene in Strike: Labor Department Will Not Act At This Time," *The Bee*, November 19, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

[93] #299, "Special Work: Report of Operative #299," November 19, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[94] #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1," November 19, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[95] #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1," 2; #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1," November 18, 1930, 1, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[96] "Communist Leader Detained Here," 1; #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1."

North Carolina the previous year.[97] In crude leaflets with tropes of fat corporate types and UTWA leaders hand drawn in the margins, the NTWU attacked union leadership instructing the reader: "Don't let the American Federation of Labor fakers sell you out!" Writing in second person as if to commiserate with strikers, the leaflet went on to decry that "our conditions are growing worse, our wages have been cut, we are speeded up and stretched out" and that nothing good could come of continuing the strike with the AFL-affiliated UTWA. The leaflet argued that the NTWU's work in Gastonia, though a failure, was not done yet and proved that their organization "is on the job more than ever" and encouraged readers to join the NTWU.[98] At a moment when strikers may have been vulnerable to the unfounded belief that they were being sold out by the UTWA, the interference of the NTWU caused more strain for union organizers and sparked anxious doubts among strikers.

As doubts crept in, local organizers again attempted to confer with Fitzgerald. Despite knowing that confidence in the UTWA and the strike was unsteady, Fitzgerald remained silent. L.G. Nunn, a once-House Representative turned organizer, appealed to Fitzgerald as the Christmas season approached. "Since much suffering is in store for many families in Danville in Schoolfield under present conditions," Nunn wrote, "it might be possible for you to prevent much of this." Nunn argued that the strike was really about the blame of the ten percent wage cut. "You and everybody in these mills knows that the [House] committee had nothing at all to do with the cut and did not consent to it," Nunn directed. If Fitzgerald just acknowledged that he had imposed the wage cut, rather than saying the wage cut had been approved by the House, the strike could end, according to Nunn. "It seems only fair that you should acknowledge the work of your own hand and not try to starve people who have only tried to keep the record straight as any self-respecting

[97] The 1929 Loray Mills strike in Gastonia has been the subject of many historical fiction books, monographs, and articles. Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia*; Salmond, *Gastonia, 1929*; Cash, *The Last Ballad.*

[98] "Textile Workers of Danville!," 1930, Box 32, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

American would," Nunn declared and then further invoked his feelings not only as an American but as a man. Nunn concluded that he didn't understand "how a normally minded man" could hold a grudge against workers who wanted collective bargaining power over their own welfare apart from a company-controlled system. These strikers were, Nunn argued, "grown men" who refused to play with "paper toys" of Industrial Democracy. Rather, these men's "whole hearts and minds are crying out loud for metal tools of full-size" whether offered to them by Dan River or the union.[99] Fitzgerald did not reply.

Rather than negotiate, Fitzgerald asserted his authority and strength wielding his control over the mills to show he would not back down to union efforts. Though the mill's shift whistles had been silent since strike was called in September, Fitzgerald re-established the practice and had them blow at the beginning of shifts on Monday, November 24 of 1930.[100] Up until this point, with the working population at Dan River about half its usual capacity, work had gone on quietly at the mills, which were the only open buildings during the strike that had shut down the surrounding community buildings such as the Welfare Building and the YMCA. Now, however, with management buoyed by organizers' weakening efforts in continuing the strike, management decided it was time to establish normalcy again.[101] The three-toned mill whistle screamed throughout Schoolfield and downtown Danville, announcing the management's dominion over the mill village and company employees in the face of the union's efforts to renegotiate that power dynamic.

The mill whistle proved to be too much for many strikers, who were by now feeling "mislead by the organizers" since seemingly no progress had been made in workers' demands for

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[99] L.G. Nunn to H. R. Fitzgerald, November 22, 1930, Box 32, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[100] "Whistles at Local Mills Blow Again: Largest Number of Persons yet to Enter the Gates Noted This Morning," *The Bee*, November 24, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

[101] Robertson to Fitzgerald, November 22, 1930.

reinstating decent wages.[102] When the whistles blew again on November 25th, the sound provoked another wave of violence and picketing that ignored previous injunctions. That night nearly forty strikers were arrested for damaging houses with rocks and stones, especially where many "scabs," namely millhands brought in from South Carolina by management, were rumored to be staying.[103] As one undercover operative reported, most of the disorder was because of a crowd of young men and women strikers, who set fire to empty sheds and homes to cause uproar and threaten so called scabs. As youthful strikers crowded the gates of the mills, they all used some violence and "profane language" against millhands heading into work and, in the spy's opinion, "women were the worst offenders."[104]

One of those allegedly offensive women may have been Carrie Strader, one of the few strikers who wrote her criticism to Fitzgerald without anonymity. With three children, the twenty-eight-year-old Strader articulated well the anger and betrayal many of the strikers felt, especially those who, like Strader had grown up under Fitzgerald's sermons and rhetoric of benevolence. "I used to think you was one of the best men in the world when I heard you make speeches at school" Strader wrote. "But since you have refused to even talk to the people that have worked and slaved for you and the company the best part of their lives, my oponion [sic] of you has changed." Strader accused Fitzgerald of not thinking about "what we poor people have to put up with."[105] Having grown up in Schoolfield her entire life, Strader felt she and her family had given their lives to the company and had been duped.

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[102] #XX-1, "Special Work: Report of Operative #XX-1," November 23, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[103] "Wild Disorders at Schoolfield," *Danville Register*, November 26, 1930, 1.

[104] #299, "Special Work: Report of Operative #299," November 25, 1930, 1–2, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[105] Carrie Strader to H. R. Fitzgerald, November 25, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

Fueled by the kind of disappointment Strader articulated, workers continued to make their demands through picketing and causing chaos in the village. Dan River management felt that their police force could do little to prevent future disorder and demanded state assistance. Fitzgerald urged Virginia Governor Pollard to get militia help in handling what he and the local press deemed "mob rule."[106] Though he initially denied any such assistance, Pollard eventually gave in to Fitzgerald's request, sending a reported 800 troops to quell strikers' efforts at both Riverside and in Schoolfield. Eighteen units of Virginia's National Guard were stationed in Schoolfield, mostly at the women's boarding house, Hylton Hall, which had been empty since September with the shutdown of welfare activities at Dan River.[107] With militia on patrol beginning Thanksgiving Day, Schoolfield was a decidedly different place. As one local press report noted "the streets of Schoolfield were well-nigh deserted except for marching squads" patrolling the village and keeping crowds of any kind from congregating in groups in the village[108] The shock of what was essentially martial law over American workers perhaps was the bigger factor quieting the village. Though the troops diminished as the weeks went on, soon workers were hit with another shock just before Christmas.[109]

In November, management paused mass evictions from company housing until the Christmas season—a cruel power play that built on their renewed control over Schoolfield with standing militia. On December 4th, mill management sent out eviction notices to at least forty-seven families living in company housing and another fourteen families were ousted from their homes in

[106] "800 Troops on Way to Schoolfield: Mob Law Prevails," *The Bee*, November 26, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

[107] "Troops May Soon Be Withdrawn: Strike Area Quiet Again; No Pickets," *Danville Bee*, November 27, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

[108] "Troops May Soon Be Withdrawn: Strike Area Quiet Again; No Pickets," 1.

[109] "To Reduce Troop Strength to 400," *Danville Bee*, December 4, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

the first cold days of 1931.[110] There could have been many reasons why Fitzgerald decided at this point, when the union seemed lost anyway, to evict strikers. None of the possible reasons aligned with the good of the Schoolfield community; rather, these tactics were seemingly meant to intimidate and crush disloyal workers into despair.

Fitzgerald knew strikers and even his own workers could not afford even the minimum rent in Schoolfield, or elsewhere in Danville. Management had not charged rent for any of the company homes "regardless of whether the occupant is at work in the mills or not" since September—an admittance on management's part that they knew rent would not be able to be paid by anyone because of the economic situation. Schoolfield businesses like Park Place Mercantile were similarly given a break on rent owed to the company and were only charged half the usual rate. With free and reduced rent, however, came the expectation of loyalty. Fitzgerald argued that even though the amount of normal rent did not "return any profit whatever on the investment" during dark winter days of the strike management felt no such "obligation to continue to furnish free rent indefinitely to people who do not work for the Company."[111] The eviction notices management doled out that winter made clear that if the strikers could pay up the arrears in rent that they owed since September, perhaps they would have been able to stay, but Fitzgerald knew, of course, that not a single millhand could have afforded to do so.[112]

Evictions helped established who was an outsider, and who was in the Dan River Mills community. When Virginia Governor Pollard voiced his concerns that the evictions would make millworkers—who were never financially secure in the first place—homeless, Dan River's lawyer

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[110] "Eviction Notices Served By Mill," *Danville Bee*, December 5, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com; Tippett, *When Southern Labor Stirs*, 243.

[111] H. R. Fitzgerald to H.L. Boatwright, February 11, 1931, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[112] "Eviction Notices Served By Mill," 1.

Malcolm Harris assured Pollard and the local press that after the December 4th evictions there would be no more evictions unless in "exceptional cases." But that was beside the point, Harris added, because the newspapers had the wrong angle on the strike. The strike, Harris opined was "not a controversy between the mills and the strikers," but rather "a controversy between those who do and do not want to work in them." Harris went on to claim that the company's position was to evict only those workers "who interfered with the rights of workers."[113] These evictions were not happening to loyal workers who had simply gone astray with the union, according to management, but criminal people who obstructed millhands' 'right' to be millhands under company control.

These evicted strikers not only lost their homes, but also any hope of returning to the company once the strike was over. The eviction notices made their expulsion from Schoolfield clear. "As you know," the company eviction notices read, "these premises are used by us for the employees of our company." "As you are not now an employee of this company," the notice continued, "and will not in the future occupy such a position with us, we desire that you should vacate the premises as promptly as possible."[114] The eviction from company housing in Schoolfield was weaponizing prior welfare for punishment. Evictions were extensibility banishment from a community that, for many younger Schoolfielders like Carrie Strader, was the only community they had ever known.

What evictions did do, especially the thirty-one issued in Schoolfield, however, was demoralize families who had lived in Schoolfield their whole lives, ostracizing them the community. In the all-encompassing world of Schoolfield, the houses had encouraged bonds of kith and kin to be formed exclusively within the village.[115] Though union organizers and sympathizers decried these

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[113] "No Further Evictions Planned for Now," 1.

[114] "Eviction Notices Served By Mill," 1.

[115] "Eviction of Strikers to Start Monday," *The Bee*, December 27, 1930, 1, Newspapers.com.

company homes as "rude houses standing on stilts, in long ugly rows," as well as "matchboxes" and "miserable little shacks," that no company officials would ever "be found moving into," evictions revealed that these small mill houses signified more than just shelter. In an already tense time in the Schoolfield community, evictions were an unneeded addition to the frayed kinship network caused by the strike.

The misery of the drawn-out strike and subsequent evictions was not lost on the Danville community. Many businesses, who lost money without the millhands' spending their paychecks, began to view Fitzgerald in a negative light rather than the upstanding businessman and citizen Fitzgerald may have thought of himself as. One German tailor in Danville named Staceh opined to a spy what he really thought of Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald was responsible for the trouble, as he was responsible for everything in the "one-man town" that he ostensibly ran. Staceh lamented that he "had never seen a town run by one man that ever amounted to anything."[116]

Other Danvillians blamed millhands for biting the generous hand that fed them. A Danville journalist covering the strike, Julian Meade, recalled that he overheard a white woman exasperatedly declare that she "never thought she'd live to see this day" when "many of those mill girls have got on silk hose" but were still "grumblin' about $13.50 a week." By Meade's account, the woman ranted on that there was nothing for those mill workers to complain about—even she didn't pay her own Black cook "but three dollars." "If the poor whites keep on like this," the woman concluded, "the next thing we know the niggers will be paradin' around."[117] As Meade observed, middle-class white Danvillians expressed anxiety as they equated what they saw as a gauche show of lower-class whites with Black men and women making similar public complaints. The importance of white workers

[116] A.G., "Operative Report," October 24, 1930, Box 33, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[117] Meade, *I Live in Virginia*, 10.

staying loyal to the Dan River, in these white Danvillians' minds, was just as important as Black workers minding their white bosses.

Other locals thought the devastation of the strike could have been prevented, had Fitzgerald been more straightforward with workers. As University of North Carolina sociologist Harriet Herring described in her visit to Danville during the strike, a man named Saunders expressed as much. Saunders told Herring that if Fitzgerald had just "come out open and shown the books and explained things, they would have stopped the union right then" before the wage cut took place. Saunders's complaint about Fitzgerald underscored his confidence in the power of Industrial Democracy to handle workers grievances, which struck Herring as odd. Herring had always heard news that Industrial Democracy was working in Danville, but she could not help but wonder: if such a system had the "complete confidence" of workers in handling grievances, why had the system "collapsed all at once"?[118]

Meade, whose father and Harry Fitzgerald played golf together, had the answer to Herring's bewilderment. Hired to write about the Danville strike by an outside press, Meade investigated by going straight to the source, Harry Fitzgerald, as well as Fitzgerald's daughter, Harriet, who was the same age as Meade. Meade concluded that the big "happy family" of millworkers had never been that at all, and the strike was similar to the way southerners had thought about Black people. "The easiest comfort was found" Meade reflected of Dan River managers, was "in considering the mill workers as so many of us considered the Negroes." "'Niggers are the happiest people in the South,' I had been told many times," Meade continued, "'Don't worry about the hovels many of them live in, don't bother about their hand-to-mouth existence. They're as carefree as larks.'"[119] This myth of the happy Black worker, in Meade's opinion, just as untrue when it came to millhands. The strike

[118] Herring, "Labor Troubles in the Danville Area," 27–28.

[119] Meade, *I Live in Virginia*, 255–56.

was not a disruption of any former worker and management happiness, but an event that had stripped away the ruse of millhand's grievance-less existence.

Danville newspaper editor Rorer James, Jr., similarly noted the grievances of millhands amidst this strike. After a reporter drafted a story on the misery found in strikers' homes, including only having potatoes to eat and rampant cases of pneumonia, James wrote to Fitzgerald. Though the workers had endured their hardships "with a fortitude characteristic of the sturdy Anglo-Saxon stock whence springs the great majority of mill workers" the conditions of these brave Anglo-Saxons according to James remained "deplorable." Management was not upholding its promised white uplift and James implored Fitzgerald to make a statement welcoming workers, even if they went for the union, back to the mills.[120] Fitzgerald acquiesced and the next day's paper ran a "welcoming" statement that "those entitled to designation of employees by their past record of performance" would be given their old positions back if they go to work fast as machinery could run.[121] This statement brought some employees trickling back in and coming back in good numbers by the end of the year, but some strikers continued to hold out hope for the UTWA.[122]

President of the American Federation of Labor William Green encouraged these persevering strikers' continued confidence and attempted again to meet with Fitzgerald to propose a plan of arbitration, as he announce in a radio-broadcasted speech.[123] In a typical fashion, Fitzgerald responded that he would make "no comment whatsoever" on meditation. Fitzgerald had little sympathy, it seemed, with the misery of the strikers. To him, the strikers were practicing "communistic gangster methods that are not at all in keeping with the true American spirit" and the

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[120] Rorer A. James Jr. to H. R. Fitzgerald, December 12, 1930, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[121] "Many Former Workers Offered Jobs. Mills Ready to Re-Employ Loyal Hands," *The Bee*, December 13, 1930, 1.

[122] "Workers Pour Thru Gates as Mills Resume," *Danville Register*, December 29, 1930, 1.

[123] "Green Here for Speech Outlines Strike Views; Hopes for Settlement," *Danville Bee*, December 30, 1930, 1; Basil Browder to H. R. Fitzgerald, December 31, 1930, Box 32, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

union was an organization that forced itself upon Dan River as "the first victim of a campaign to organize the entire south." Believing that Dan River workers "have been prosperous and happy and there was actually no grievance nor any question for friction between them and the company," Fitzgerald's continued stony silence was unsurprising.[124] It was clear Fitzgerald took on the spirit articulated by another manufacturer, who wrote to Fitzgerald his support and advice that "the only real cure for a snapping dog is to kill him, and the proper treatment of a bully is a thrashing."[125] While Fitzgerald rarely used the same words, his reticence to union negotiations belied his violent reprisal of the union as he evicted his millhands and occupied their community with National Guard troops.

With militia still stationed in Schoolfield and families recently ousted from their homes, the new year of 1931 brought a few more desperate acts of renegade striker violence, but the tide had decidedly turned in the mill's favor. Though the union did not agree, the local press reported that the mills were almost back to full capacity, with nearly 3,500 millhands at work. With workers returning and evicted strikers living in desperate conditions having run through union funding and rations, Fitzgerald felt confident enough that company would win out in the strike.

In an unusual statement to Dan River Mills stockholders and board members on January 22, 1931, Fitzgerald finally broke his silence regarding the strike, offering a bitter summary of the past four-month strike. Though these published annual statements to stockholders and the board usually were signed by the board chairman, in this case still Robert Addison Schoolfield, Fitzgerald took over and controlled the narrative. Fitzgerald stated that the responsibility for the loss was not on the company. Fitzgerald claimed that for nearly a year, Dan River had been occupied with "full corps of agitators and professional propagandists" who "with shrewd and experienced cleverness" made the

[124] H. R. Fitzgerald to C.E. Woodson, January 10, 1931, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[125] Howard E. Bennett to H. R. Fitzgerald, December 31, 1930, Box 28, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

company the first "victim" in a campaign to organize the southern textile industry. These agitators had destroyed "the many years of happy and prosperous conditions which have distinguished the relations of your company with employees." Through "lawlessness and intimidation" organizers and "outside gangsters" encouraged "the foolish idea that by shooting up houses and throwing dynamite" and other "depraved conduct" they could force the company to compromise on the strike. The organizers' efforts were to no avail, Fitzgerald assured his stockholders and board. The strike itself, he claimed "has caused your company but little inconvenience," despite the devastating annual financial report that cited company profit losses over half a million dollars. Fitzgerald reassured stockholders and his board that the company had taken strategic cost-cutting measures, including slashing all staff salaries over thirty percent and eliminating one of Fitzgerald's favorite programs, that of group insurance for workers, which formerly entitled each worker's family up to $1,500 in case of their illness or death.[126] Fitzgerald concluded his statement with confidence, with hopeful projections for operations and modest profit in 1931.

Fitzgerald's statement was fully supported by the board, if not the Danville community for whom the strike had cost an estimated $1.7 million in business losses, costs for extra police, and repairs to damaged property.[127] Despite the obvious damages to the community in the company's prolonged practice of negligence to the state of impoverished striking workers, the board unanimously approved of Fitzgerald's handling of the strike. At the board meeting that January, members placed on record a collective resolution that "there is no difference of opinion among them as to the fair and just treatment that all employees of this company have received throughout its history." They continued in agreement that "there is not now and has never been any so-called

[126] "Riverside & Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc. Annual Report," January 22, 1931, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[127] "Danville's Strike Cost Put By Robert S. Meade at Total $1,756,422.75," *The Bee*, August 10, 1931, 1, Newspapers.com.

grievance or unfair treatment of the employees of this company by the management or stockholders." And finally, that "the responsibility the loss and suffering to the community does not lie with this company nor its management," but with the union and its followers.[128] In a show of their approval, the board unanimously voted to re-elect Fitzgerald as president of the mill.[129]

The confidence of Fitzgerald and the board that they remained blameless for the strike's devastating effects on thousands of millhands' lives and the surrounding community exhausted the last morale reserves of the union. At the end of January, a reported ninety-five percent of local union members voted to end the four-month long strike.[130] In a statement, the Vice President of the UTWA Francis Gorman advised workers to return to the mill, and said that the union had made the decision to end the strike voluntarily in the hopes that management would accept the decision as "a measure of confidence and trust" which could again "enable employer and employee to view their problems eye to eye."[131] Though the strike had been lost, the few remaining members of the UTWA Local 1685 stayed hopeful that union recognition would come with time. Their hopes would be addressed soon under a new progressive American president in 1932 and a coming New Deal but did not materialize with the strike.

Even after the strike, Virginia National Guard troops still occupied Schoolfield streets and Hylton Hall. Many workers, who were told they would be re-instated if they applied for their old jobs at the mills, instead continued to be turned away because of their support of the failed union. Hundreds of former Dan River employees, stranded in the midst of winter and a global economic

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[128] "Stockholders Endorse Fitzgerald," *The Bee*, January 22, 1931, 1, Newspapers.com.

[129] "Fitzgerald Is Still at Wheel of Local Mills," *The Bee*, January 23, 1931, 1, Newspapers.com.

[130] "Textile Strike Is Believed Over," *The Bee*, January 29, 1931, 1, Newspapers.com; "Destitution Is Strike Aftermath," *The Bee*, January 30, 1931, 1, Newspapers.com.

[131] "Destitution Is Strike Aftermath," 1.

depression, were left to depend on the charity of strangers and relief organizations such as the Red Cross to maintain some standard of living without positions available to them at the mills.[132]

Despite Fitzgerald's proud demeanor, the strike had cost him something, too. His performance of executive strength throughout the long weeks of the strike had deteriorated his health significantly. Since 1924, well before the strike, Fitzgerald's struggle to maintain control and knowledge of both the changing economic situation as well as sentiment among workers was amplified by his own struggle with hearing loss. In the opinion of one Danville writer, Fitzgerald's "acute deafness and impediment of speech" had been "making it increasingly difficult for him to know what was happening in the mills."[133] While his deafness allowed him to evade union negotiations, it had also placed him out of the daily workings of his domain at the mill and Industrial Democracy, leaving space for only the most planned remarks in front of Representatives and his board to mask his hearing loss and difficulty speaking. Out of touch with his company, despite it being "Papa's lifework," as his daughter Harriet described it, Fitzgerald's desperate grip on his control of Dan River welfare and Industrial Democracy ultimately brought about the end to those programs.[134] Fitzgerald's commitment to total control brought about his own demise as well. Strained, stressed, and angry, Fitzgerald died of a heart attack a month after the strike ended. He was fifty-seven. [135]

Though some had wished it or even threatened it, Fitzgerald's death came as a shock to many strikers and millhands, whose futures had already been so uncertain for the past year. When the mills reopened after being closed the day after his death in memoriam of Fitzgerald,

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[132] "Destitution Is Strike Aftermath," 1.

[133] Meade, *I Live in Virginia*, 7.

[134] Meade, 8.

[135] "H.R. Fitzgerald Dies Unexpectedly," *The Bee*, February 24, 1931, 1, Newspapers.com; "H.R. Fitzgerald, Textile Man, Dead," *New York Times*, February 24, 1931, 21.

management, now led by an interim president Ira Pritchett, was at a crossroads. The next president of the mills would have the opportunity to start worker and management relations anew, without the guise of democratic processes.

Local labor leader L.G. Nunn prepared for this change in mill leadership later that year in August when the Local 1685 shared resolutions with Dan River Mills secretary, C.D. Gaver. The local union reminded management that the previous "policy of the Riverside and Dan River Mills in abridging the constitutional rights and privileges of their employees," during Industrial Democracy that had, in their opinion, left the workers "on a lower plane than the slave of old, for whose every want, self-interest compelled the master to provide." Though the local union continued to condemn the company's handling of the strike, they added that "despite the mistaken policy of the Company leading up to the strike," they still hoped for "a chance to prove to their satisfaction that a legitimate trade union is rather to be desired than to be feared." As Nunn and other members made clear, any new president at Dan River would have to do more than provide welfare, they would have to see, hear, and confer with union members man to man.[136]

Conclusion

The Dan River strike of 1930-1931 exposed the weakness of management's commitment to democratic governance and worker welfare. Though investments in schemes such as Industrial Democracy were lauded as in the worker's best interest, those same schemes were implemented as preventive measures against worker disloyalty that cut against millhands' self-interest. As a result, instead of being a bulwark against worker dissent and unionization, Industrial Democracy actually fueled and prepared workers for union organizing. However, as workers sought to wield their

[136] R.M. Moseley, L.G. Nunn, and Mary Shumate, "Resolution 29" (Local 1685, August 22, 1931), 4, Box 29, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

training, they quickly realized that the tools of collective action management had offered through Industrial Democracy were mere "playthings."[137]

As millhands struck and took to Schoolfield's streets, the mill gates, Ballou Park, and even Fitzgerald's own house to assert their power over a world that management had previously dominated, Fitzgerald did not acknowledge their legitimacy. He crushed their efforts instead with a broad network of spies, police, the National Guard, and a winter of evictions. These tactics weakened millhands' resolve to demand fair wages and the treatment they had been accustomed to as white workers under Dan River's program of white uplift. As many striking millhands were evicted and became reliant on the union for ever-diminishing rations and uncertain shelter, they may have realized that neither Dan River nor the union had the authority, or could fulfil the duty, to provide for workers' well-being.

The strike not only revealed Dan River management's failure provide for workers' welfare. The tension between workers who remained with the company and those who joined unionizing efforts also revealed the myth of racial harmony of Schoolfield. On either side, agitators and victims were re-racialized in ways that discounted their inclusion into a collective whiteness. As management labeled pro-union workers as outside agitators beyond the Anglo racial hierarchy, union organizers used racialized language against anti-union millhands. Both management and organizers attempted to create new boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in an explosive strike. This dissonance was only exacerbated by Fitzgerald's hearing loss and recalcitrance in the face of powerful worker demands that were backed by the AFL-affiliated United Textile Workers of America.

Ultimately, the strike revealed the diminished returns of Dan River management's investment in the white right of textiles. The democratic guise of Industrial Democracy, like so many other amenities of village life including schools, company housing, welfare, and recreation programs,

[137] L.G. Nunn to H. R. Fitzgerald, November 22, 1930, 2, Box 32, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

masked management's power over setting the value of its white workers' uplift. Management limited the privileges of that whiteness to those productive white workers who remained or reaffirmed their loyalty to the company and to the management. As workers attempted to organize, they endured a fall from civility, in management's eyes, into violence, unAmericanism, and selfish dross. Ultimately, it was the same tools management used to prevent such a fall, such as Industrial Democracy, that led to a gulf of distance between management and workers that Fitzgerald had tried so hard to prevent.

CONCLUSION

In his popular 1899 textbook about how to start a textile mill, author Daniel Tompkins clearly stated the industry's purpose as part of a larger call to put "all the energy and all the moral and physical courage of the white people of the South to save civilization and preserve the social status."[1] Southern industrialization was largely lauded as a salve against the "chaotic disorder," of Reconstruction, as the author of *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features* put it. Although novices in the textile industry, Dan River Mills founders answered Tompkins's call to ensure preservation of white southerners' status and economic stability in a moment of white racial anxiety. Without the clear barriers between Black and white that slavery had offered before emancipation, Danville industrialists deployed whiteness as a separate and distinct social category through the creation of Dan River Mills.

In another era of racial anxiety when white elites feared the "passing of the great race," company management tried to protect and normalize whiteness in the mill village of Schoolfield.[2] Through the spaces where millhands lived, worked, and played, Dan River management showcased the privileges of whiteness through exclusivity, architectural design, and urban amenities. Under the auspices of Dan River, white millhands had electric lights, paved main streets, grand brick community buildings, ball parks, and tidy homes that became the landmarks of their everyday lives.

[1] Tompkins, *Cotton Mill, Commercial Features*, 109.

[2] Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (New York Scribner, 1916; Internet Archive, 2008), http://archive.org/details/passingofgreatra00granuoft.

To protect the legacy of white supremacist racial hierarchy, these landmarks of urban community were plated with the appellations of an antebellum south. In the patriarchal naming of the Schoolfield village itself, the paternalism of the company and the legacy of one of its founders emerged in tandem with modern amenities. Another gilded past was stamped on the streets of Schoolfield, which had names heralding figures from the Confederacy. Far more integrated into the everyday community fabric than traditional Confederate memorials, these residential street names mapped out workers' world with the implications of an antebellum racial hierarchy. Balancing the modern urban company town with southern paternalism and Confederate legacy, Dan River management answered the profitable promise of the New South with the racial language of the old.

It was not enough to build a world according to profit and southern ideals. To ensure returns on their dual economic and social investment, management hired white, professional women to lead an extensive welfare program. Within feminine spaces of Schoolfield, these women transformed millhand folk into Anglo-Saxon citizens by providing health, educational, and childcare services for workers. In this process, too, was a balancing act between value and profit. In the early years of the program, welfare was directed at supporting women and children, who, though it went against accepted notions of white middle-class family life, were more cost-effective laborers at the mill. To balance the need to employ these cheaper workers with the demands of an Anglo, Progressive era ideal, white women implemented a welfare system that allowed women and children to work in the mill and fulfill middle-class, white social ideals of male provider and female wife and mother. While the notions of whiteness were still unsettled, both women and management worked to realize their own versions through industrial maternalism and welfare capitalism at Dan River.

As textile markets benefitted from a World War I boom, management's focus shifted from these feminine spaces to spaces that could inculcate a white masculine ideal. Encouraging male millhands to control vices, idealize the ginned-up heroism of Confederate figures, and to be

productive providers for their families, management hoped to increase labor stability and loyalty at Dan River Mills. During the teens and early 1920s, management invested in rituals of masculinity, such as boastful parades and a company baseball team. The biggest investment that management made in these masculine ideals, however, was in the creation of Industrial Democracy. This company union allowed worker grievances to be aired through a mechanism mimicking American democratic governance. With a House of elected worker Representatives, a Senate of department managers, and an executive branch of management, Industrial Democracy, like baseball games and parades, used millhands' leisure time for activities conducive to the mill's profit.

At least, that's what management thought their investment in these programs would do. As textile markets slumped along with millhands' earnings beginning in 1924, the guise of millhands' privileged social status fell away, too. To reassert their value amidst diminishing wages, millhands leveraged Schoolfield's programs and built environment against the company. Wielding the tools of white masculinity they had sharpened through Dan River's extensive welfare programs, millhands went on strike, demanding greater wages and recognition of an American Federation of Labor-affiliated union. Strikers, many of whom had been Representatives in Industrial Democracy, used what they had learned about collective organizing from the company and argued against wage cuts in correspondence and other communication directly with management. These strikers also pushed for management to recognize them "man to man" by occupying the spaces management had built for pro-labor parades and picketing. It was only through evictions and policing that company management reclaimed control over the built environment, squashing workers' efforts for recognition on their own terms. The strike pushed management's deft balance of valuing the white worker and profiting from his labor decidedly to the profit side. By the 1930s with a white privileged racial hierarchy normalized, management could easily divest itself of the cause—creating, protecting, and cultivating whiteness—that had previously fueled Dan River Mills' founding and development.

What this dissertation has ultimately attempted to contribute is an understanding of the social power of economic endeavors. As historian Nan Enstad has argued, there can be no economic strategy a company makes separate from the influence of culture, rather, the economic and social are intertwined at every level.[3] At a corporation like Dan River, the value of whiteness was always in relationship with the net profit of the company. As this dissertation shows, at times profit and value could be in harmony, but at critical moments of conflict, management had to decide where to put their time, energy, and money. Dan River's strategies for labor control through recruitment strategies and mill village design and programming demonstrate that at every moment investments were made in a fragile balance of corporate profit and the social project of creating whiteness.

The power of the mill village as a landmark of whiteness is another contribution of this dissertation. Historians of the south have done excellent work tracing the social creation of whiteness, but too often neglect mill life as a main thread in the fabric of this creation. In line with historians of southern culture like Fitzhugh Brundage, Grace Hale, and Jane Dailey relegate their discussions of whiteness to political movements, festivals, elite-led commemorative activities, and the spectacle of racial violence, without mentioning the everyday material ways segregation was built and maintained in the south. The banality of buildings is anything but to architectural historians Robert Blythe and Margaret Crawford, who argued that villages' conscious development offered spaces for cultural values to be "acted out."[4] However, these studies of the everyday built environment, too, only tell one side of the story without exploring the practice and rituals of whiteness that made up mill culture. Unlike previous studies of southern culture and the built

[3] Enstad, *Cigarettes, Inc*, xi.

[4] Blythe, "Unravelling the Threads of Community Life: Work, Play, and Place in the Alabama Villages of the West Point Manufacturing Company," 136.

environment of mill villages, this dissertation illuminates the ways whiteness was created through non-monumental means. Bringing race to the fore in the historic narrative of southern industrialization, the history of Dan River and Schoolfield shows that white supremacy was codified in the postbellum south in the everyday built environment such as schools, homes, streets, and recreation sites that made up millhands' "frame of reference" for their lived experience.[5]

There is a limit to the contributions this one case study of Dan River can make, however. A local story, for one, cannot not map out easily onto broader generalizations. By studying a small place in-depth, a local study offers the intricacies of relationships, kinship, and economic networks that are distinctive to a particular time and place, making for uneasy national or even regional comparison. While Dan River's story limits the generalizability of its narrative, a case study allows an in-depth understanding of the local mechanisms of white supremacy. These machinations can be seen more clearly through an analysis of the controlled environment of a mill village, rather than generalizations about mill villages or company towns. An approach that values the local built environment and the historical relationships that forged its creation provides new insights into the process of southern industrialization and the creation of the white southern cotton mill world.

Another serious limitation in the Dan River story, and any narrative about the creation of whiteness, is that it can reiterate a narrative that is just as segregated as these white enclaves. I hope future research can bring in a more detailed comparison of the design and layout of the built environment in the all-Black working-class neighborhoods of Almagro and Schoolfield. These types of studies may reveal commonalities of architecture, streetscapes, and housing quality, broadening an understanding of the contradictions inherent in the lie of white supremacy and create a more inclusive understanding of white supremacy's mechanisms. This dissertation has offered one story

[5] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 4.

that points us in a more positive direction in undertaking a more comprehensive racial reckoning with the legacy of the southern textile industry.

Despite this dissertation's limitations, the reframed narrative of the southern textile industry, an oft-studied subject, is renewed with possibilities for future research. If mill villages can be viewed not as mere "fiefs of the mills" but the precedent to suburbs, in what ways did these early twentieth enclaves set the foundation for the post-war suburb's design, feeling, and setting?[6] Is whiteness still embedded in these buildings that once stood for and served white uplift in the south? What would thoughtful revitalization look like when these buildings are resurrected anew from their previous purpose as industrial communities? If we understand the power of the planned built environment to shape everyday experience, what is our responsibility today to plan for inclusion and diversity?

Today, as developers, city governments, and financial institutions reassess the value of these mill villages across the south through revitalization, these villages' narratives will be written anew.[7] Future generations who live, work, and play in these spaces once curated for the white millhand family bring new meaning to these places. As that meaning is negotiated among the networks involved in redevelopment—developers, city officials real, estate agents, and tenants—these networks would be wise to be mindful of the legacies of southern textile mill villages so as to not repeat the practices of racial segregation and exclusionary uplift by design. It is only by understanding these less buoyant histories that we can we recreate these southern places to reflect, not guard against, the diversity of the American south.

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[6] Cash, *The Mind of the South*, 200.

[7] Two recent redevelopment projects in former mill towns of Rocky Mount and Gastonia, North Carolina, for instance, incorporated historical narratives of these villages in digital and standing exhibits. In Greensboro, an entire industrial campus has been redeveloped and also features an exhibit narrating the mill's history. "Digital Loray," https://loraydigital.prospect.unc.edu/; "Digital Rocky Mount Mills – Recovering Voices in the Shadow of Change," https://rockymountmill.prospect.unc.edu/; "History Exhibit – Revolution Mill," https://revolutionmillgreensboro.com/history-gallery/.

EPILOGUE

The Fate of Dan River after 1931

The 1930-1931 strike marked an ending for Dan River Mills. With the textile market still in shambles and labor relations deeply wounded, Harry Fitzgerald's death in February and Robert Addison Schoolfield's death in October of 1931 bookended the era of Dan River's early growth. When the interim president, Ira Pritchett, died the following year, Dan River's board decided to promote mill director Robert Rout West. West was the company's first president in its fifty-year history who did not stem from a founding family of the mills.[1] A Massachusettsan, West was a professional textile manager who sought to right the company's finances in the storm of the Depression era 1930s. After years of struggling to regain financial stability, West's efforts were undermined by a sluggish global market and local personnel issues at Dan River. West, pressured by the board, resigned in 1940 and was quickly replaced with another northern professional textile manager, George Harris. Another Massachusettsan, Harris had demonstrated his managerial capabilities as president of a mill in South Carolina before he was tapped for the Dan River presidency.[2] The reign of northern, professional textile executives at Dan River had begun, ending the company's distinctly southern founding and development.

Harris had better luck than West in steering the company to profit. The outbreak of World War II in 1941 gave textiles and the national economy a much-needed boost. With new-found profit, Dan River Mills sought to shake off the old paternalism of the past and turn over company-

[1] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 239.

[2] Smith, 413; "New Mill Head Takes Over May 1," *Danville Bee*, April 10, 1940, 1,6, Newspapers.com.

owned houses to the millhands themselves for "efficiency of management" of company operations.[3] With many returning veterans of the war having more access to credit for mortgages and other benefits through the G.I. Bill, company housing ceased to be an attractive benefit for millworkers. Noting this cultural and economic shift towards homeownership as well as the high cost required for a much-needed upgrade of company homes (which were still without indoor plumbing), Dan River began selling off the first of their company houses to millhands themselves in 1949, eventually selling the bulk of housing by the mid-1950s.

Dan River Mills was generous in terms of their sales to their white employees. Current millhand occupants of company housing had first right to purchase, and if they decided to do so, they only needed to make a down payment of ten percent of the purchase price. These mill families were assured that they would get a loan if needed at the First National Bank in Danville, and all expenses of the sale such as attorney's fees or real estate taxes through the year 1950, were covered by the mills.[4] Dan River's generous sale conditions did not, of course, benefit the company's 1,000 Black workers at the time, who were relegated to non-operative positions and therefore excluded from living in company housing. [5] These workers were further excluded from homeownership in Schoolfield as official deeds for company houses included covenants against allowing occupancy or selling the property to "any person of Negro descent" for a period of twenty years after the sale.[6] Black workers' acquisition of credit through lending institutions also was impeded by discriminatory lending practices endorsed by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in the decades after World

[3] Herring, *Passing of the Mill Village*, 6; Moore, "Discourses of Work and Consumption in the Demise of the Southern Cotton Mill Village System."

[4] "Terms of Housing Sale to Interested Employees" (Dan River, Inc., November 14, 1950), Courtesy of Judy Edmonds.

[5] Smith, *Mill on the Dan*, 510.

[6] "Deed of Bargain and Sale" (Dan River, Inc., December 1, 1950), Courtesy of Judy Edmonds.

War II. Though the company was no longer led by southern leadership, many of the old habits of racial discrimination remained.[7]

The continued whiteness of the Schoolfield community became an attractive selling point for Danville's eventual annexation of Schoolfield, which would cause Dan River to relinquish control of the company village altogether. The annexation of Schoolfield had been a popular topic of local discussion beginning as early as 1907, but in 1949 an urban consultant, Harland Batholemew & Associates, hired by City of Danville issued a report strongly recommending that the city annex Schoolfield.[8] Bolstered by the consultant's report, city leaders in Danville strengthened efforts to integrate the village of 5,000 white residents into the greater city. Dan River's initial resolve against annexation softened as the company experienced a decline in profits by the end of the 1940s and a rise in labor troubles led by the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) in 1950.[9]

Since 1939, the TWUA had been actively engaged in raising the earnings of the southern textile worker. The TWUA had made Dan River Mills, which continued to set wages for the rest of the southern industry, its particular target, which it had had a foothold in since 1942, when workers voted in favor of a TWUA union. With this union presence, the TWUA launched a southern campaign with the goal of leveraging Dan River as its first organized achievement.[10] In 1951, nearly seventy-five percent of workers belonged to the TWUA, giving the union confidence in their campaign.[11] When negotiations with Dan River for a renewed contract with the TWUA came to a

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[7] As Timothy Minchin has argued, though the workers were often demeaned as racists, textile executives themselves held prejudiced views. Timothy J. Minchin, *Hiring the Black Worker: The Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry, 1960-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 18–19.

[8] Harland Batholemew & Associates, "A Report Upon City Growth and City Boundaries: Danville, Virginia" (St. Louis, Missouri, January 1949), 28.

[9] Timothy J. Minchin, *What Do We Need a Union for? The TWUA in the South, 1945-1955*, The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 21.

[10] Minchin, 120.

[11] Minchin, 122.

standstill in early 1951, the TWUA called a strike at the end of March, demanding wage increases. After five weeks, company management complied with the demands for this increase. Management's caving was pyrrhic victory for the TWUA, however.[12] The disruption of the strike frightened off other southern workers from joining the TWUA, and similarly depressed the TWUA's stronghold at Dan River.[13] By 1953, TWUA membership had dropped from 7,900 to 2,000, a dramatic loss that rippled into later losses for the TWUA in organizing the southern textile industry.[14]

In tandem with this strike, Dan River gave up the village to the City of Danville over the course of 1951, ushering in new changes in the day-to-day life of village residents. The Welfare Building and Hylton Hall were converted to company offices rather than community centers. The Schoolfield High School (SHS) on Baltimore Avenue, built in 1913 with company funds, was closed and students were "integrated," in the words of one SHS alumna from the last class in 1954, into George Washington High School in Danville.[15] Residents exercised their new rights as homeowners and altered company houses according to their own aesthetic desires, varying the look and feel of the once uniform community. The company town of Schoolfield was now just another neighborhood in Danville.

Other changes came to Dan River as a result of later civil rights demonstrations, legislation, and subsequent lawsuits against the Danville textile giant in the 1960s. Civil rights activists saw the potential for "economic uplift" for Black workers to move from agricultural work to industrial work in textiles.[16] The economic and social uplift was made more urgent for Black Danvillians after

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[12] United States Department of Labor, "Wage Chronology of Dan River Mills, 1943-65," 1.

[13] Minchin, *What Do We Need a Union For?*, 161.

[14] Minchin, 151, 175.

[15] Carol Handy and Elaine H. Parker Interview.

[16] Minchin, *Hiring the Black Worker*, 28.

"Bloody Monday," a civil rights protest that turned violent on June 10, 1963. To curtail a peaceful civil rights protest at the city courthouse in downtown Danville, city police deputized garbage men and other city workers with clubs and fire hoses, brutally injuring many civil rights protestors outside the courthouse steps.[17] Following this city-sanctioned brutality on its own citizens and a subsequent visit to the city by Martin Luther King Jr., the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organized a general boycott of Dan River Mills. SNCC protesters made demands for "the [Dan River] owners to use their influence" to stop further police brutality and to provide equal job opportunities for Black Americans.[18]

As the largest employer in Danville, Dan River Mills could have been an integrating influence in the city. Managers at the company could have modeled a way forward for Danville by integrating Black Danvillians into their 14,000 strong work force in the early 1960s. Yet, the company resisted until compelled to do so following a 1969 lawsuit *Julius Adams et al. v Dan River Mills, Inc.* Wielding the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Adams and at least twenty-five other Black plaintiffs successfully sued the company for its segregationist policies and racially biased hiring and promotion practices. As a result of this lawsuit, Dan River was required to begin considering Black workers for production jobs for the first time in its almost 100-year history. The biggest impact this litigation had on the southern textile industry was on the hiring of Black women, who had in some cases made up as little 0.2 percent of the production workforce and had often faced more hiring discrimination than Black male workers.[19] Yet, just as Black workers were arriving in supervisory and operative positions at the company, Dan

[17] For more on the lived experience of Bloody Monday, see Emma Edmunds digital exhibit and oral history project "Mapping Local Knowledge: Danville, Virginia 1945 - 1975."

[18] "Racial Actions to Be Detailed for Governor," *The Bee*, July 18, 1963, sec. A, 1–2.

[19] Timothy J. Minchin, "Black Activism, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry," *The Journal of Southern History* 65, no. 4 (1999): 818, https://doi.org/10.2307/2587588.

River began its slow economic decline starting in 1970, when the company reported its first profit loss in thirty years.[20]

With each passing decade after 1970, the fate of Dan River fell under a fateful shadow like so many other American manufacturing companies. In 1982, the hundredth year of the company's operation, Dan River reported another disturbing loss in net income— the company had lost $8.7 million that year, a huge decline from their previous years' net income of $14.5 million and $19.6 million.[21] After struggling with overexpansion, more labor strikes in the 1970s, and the onslaught of a national recession, in 1982 Dan River was also fighting back an attempt by the infamous corporate raider Carl Icahn to buy out Dan River's publicly traded stock. The company was able to maintain local shareholder control, but not without damaging its own fiscal health. To resist Icahn's buyout, Dan River formed a separate, employee-owned corporation to buy Dan River's stock and privatize the company, taking out a $150 million loan to keep Dan River in local hands.[22]

Under the weight of this debt and stretched thin by zealous acquisition of other textile companies in the south, Dan River floundered into the 1990s when globalization struck a final blow to its clothing apparel line and even its successful home fabrics line. In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect, removing trade barriers between the United States, Mexico and Canada. NAFTA did not impose standards for workers' rights and fair wages, undermining American workers, whose standard of living required wages that could not compete

[20] Dan River Inc., "Dan River Inc. Annual Report" (Danville, Virginia, 1970), 18–19, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[21] Dan River Inc., "Dan River Inc. Annual Report" (Danville, Virginia, 1982), 1, Box 121, Dan River Mills, Inc., Records #5793, SHC.

[22] Linette Lopez, "The Time Carl Icahn Fought An Entire Virginia Town And Lost," *Business Insider*, August 7, 2013, https://www.businessinsider.com/carl-icahn-danville-virginia-dan-river-2013-8.

with labor from countries like Mexico.[23] Some executives saw NAFTA as actually keeping Dan River Mills afloat into the twenty-first century as a global market saved their labor costs. Linwood Wright, Vice President of Research, Quality, and Design at the mills during this time, believed that NAFTA allowed Dan River to export operations from Danville to cheaper labor in Mexico and the Caribbean Islands. A witness to the effect of a growing global economy, Wright attributed Dan River's eventual economic demise to a free market, where counties like China and Mexico simply out-produced—at a lower cost—American manufacturers, who were increasingly less competitive in a global market.[24]

Despite the diminishing economic market for American manufacturing, Dan River continued to spend freely in the 1990s. In 1995, Dan River signed an optimistic fifteen-year, $2.6-million annual lease for two floors at the lavish 1325 Avenue of the Americas in New York City.[25] Yet in the same fiscal year, Dan River reported a net income of just $258,000—a dramatic slump from the previous two years' average net income of $3 million. Losing cash and in massive debt, Dan River went public once again in 1996 in an effort to stave off economic starvation. For many employees, the writing was on the wall: Dan River was no longer the stable employer it once was.

Whether due to NAFTA or the result of the broader global free market, by the early 2000s, Dan River's net income was steadily declining and the company's debt rising.[26] In 2002, one of Dan River's biggest customers, Kmart, filed for bankruptcy, forcing Dan River to take on bad debt while

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[23] Timothy J. Minchin, "An Uphill Fight: Ernest F. Hollings and the Struggle to Protect the South Carolina Textile Industry, 1959-2005," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 109, no. 3 (2008): 200.

[24] E. Linwood Wright, interview by Ina Dixon, March 7, 2018.

[25] Mervyn Rothstein, "Real Estate; The World Trade Center Increases Business from Medium-Sized Companies, Not from Mega-Deals.," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1995, https://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/20/business/real-estate-world-trade-center-increases-business-medium-sized-companies-not.html.

[26] In 2000, Dan River's reported net income was down six million dollars from the previous two years reported net income. Dan River Inc., "Dan River Inc. Annual Report" (Danville, Virginia, 2000), 26, Mergent Historical Annual Reports.

management waited for Kmart to reorganize.[27] The economic distress trickled down to workers at Dan River as layoffs began in 2001 and continued in waves each year, leaving hundreds of local people, many of whom had no or little college education or other training, out of work. In March of 2004, Dan River filed for chapter eleven bankruptcy, another last effort to reorganize and get control over hemorrhaging profit losses, reported at $153 million that year.[28] The company continued to lay off workers and consolidate or close divisions to reduce debt and payroll costs. Finally, in 2006, Gujarat Heavy Chemicals Limited, an India-based company, bought Dan River, stripped the mills for machinery, and shuttered U.S. operations.[29] Schoolfield was the last operating division of the company when Dan River closed at the end of 2006, with the last employee to leave her shift at the mill on December 29th.[30]

In the wake of its 2006 demise, Dan River's vast industrial and commercial real estate was sold off to the lowest bidder. Along with mills in its Riverside Division in downtown Danville, Dan River's community buildings and offices in Schoolfield were slowly demolished or destroyed. In 2006, the 1916 YMCA was torn down for a CVS pharmacy store despite residents' protests to save the Schoolfield landmark. In 2012, the company's 1919 boarding house and eventual offices, Hylton Hall, was purchased by an out-of-town developer and succumbed to arson as the building was left vacant and unsecured. The industrial buildings on the Schoolfield mill site, including two weave sheds, mills number one, two, three, four and a part of mill number five, were salvaged for bricks

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[27] Letter to shareholders in Dan River Inc., "Dan River Inc. Annual Report" (Danville, Virginia, 2001), Mergent Historical Annual Reports.

[28] Dan River Inc., "Dan River Inc Form 10-K," 2004, 2-4;17, Securities and Exchange Commission, https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/0000914384/000119312504064676/d10k.htm.

[29] Carla Bagley, "Dan River Closing Mill; 490 People to Lose Jobs," Greensboro News and Record http://www.greensboro.com/business/dan-river-closing-mill-people-to-lose-jobs/article_9e60b7cb-510e-594e-b7f9-c1447e8ecd61.html.

[30] Tara Bozick, "The Rise and Fall of Dan River Inc.," NewsAdvance.com, https://www.newsadvance.com/news/local/the-rise-and-fall-of-dan-river-inc/article_2131dd6b-1abf-5143-958e-8111ee8d7d89.html.

between 2008 and 2012. Even with the gap-toothed built environment left in Dan River's wake, Danville lost more than buildings after Dan River left. With the loss of its major industries and then hit hard by a global recession in 2008, from 1990 to 2010, Danville lost nearly twenty percent of its population. Those who could leave, did. It was hard for the local government to attract talent, new industries, and new sources of revenue for a traumatized city without yet a path or vision for the future.

Yet since 2010, the City of Danville has taken extraordinary steps to revitalize their downtown and reclaim an identity beyond the industries that made the city. In 2011, the City's Office of Economic Development created a catalytic revitalization plan that rebranded Danville's downtown Tobacco Warehouse District as the "River District" and sparked over $150 million in new private investment for this central city area. The once-abandoned tobacco warehouses are filled with nearly 4,000 employees who work in River District businesses and 2,000 residents who live in rehabilitated historic lofts downtown. Danville residents have begun to recognize the power of their historic urban fabric and natural assets in the River District.[31]

Even in Schoolfield, rehabilitation of many former Dan River buildings is in the future. In November of 2020, Danville citizens voted overwhelmingly to allow gambling in the city and the City has partnered with Caesars as casino operator. Between 2021-2023, Caesars has plans to build a resort casino on the former Schoolfield mill site. This former pile of "dead bricks" will be the home to a $400 million resort with hotels, restaurants, bars, music venue, and conference center set to open in 2023. Caesars has promised 1,300 jobs, and a lump sum of five million dollars to the City of Danville for the casino site, in addition to a $15 million bonus to the city when the referendum passed. City leaders hope that the casino's estimated tax payments when in operation—at least $22

[31] Corrie Teague Bobe, "Danville, Virginia Downtown Presentation" (PowerPoint Presentation, Buena Vista Community Stakeholders Meeting, Buena Vista, Virginia, April 5, 2019).

million—will fuel their city budget, expanding needed tax revenue into its schools, police, and the Schoolfield community itself for an overall master plan of the residential area.[32] Caesars will have the power to create value in places and people that have suffered from a history of divestment. The tax revenue Caesars will generate, the people they will bring, and the way they do business will change the city.

While the casino may change the community, it is not likely to have such a hold on the city as the men at the mills once did. Since 2010, Danville's city leadership has worked to reinvest in the downtown area, diversify the economy and its local leadership, and make the city a better place to live, work, and play. In addition to downtown historic preservation and vibrancy, today Danville has a diverse city council, a Black mayor, and a police chief dedicated to racial justice. The majority of Danvillians are people of color. Even as a minority of white Danvillians continue to fetishize the Confederacy, it is the majority Black citizens who will ultimately help determine Danville's future and reshape the landscape into something inclusive, welcoming, and renewed.

Not knowing what the future will bring for this city, I have written about the past. In this dissertation that draws from personal, professional, and academic experience I have offered a different narrative of Danville's past investments, a narrative that highlights the social investments of a seemingly dispassionate industrial corporation, which set up a hierarchy of race in Danville and Schoolfield in the early twentieth century. This history of Dan River can help ground well-intentioned revitalization efforts that are on their way. May this story voice an undying truth in the south and in America that race matters, and will continue to matter, until we learn to see and name it.

[32] John Crane, "Officials Say Schoolfield Site Has Enough Space for Casino," *Danville Register & Bee*, September 8, 2020, https://godanriver.com/business/officials-say-schoolfield-site-has-enough-space-for-casino/article_4f1c483c-43c2-563a-954b-f98bbea14caf.html.

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